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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Fourth periodic report of States parties

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*

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* For the initial report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/5/Add.52 and Amend.1–4; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.155, CEDAW/C/SR.156, CEDAW/C/SR.159 and CEDAW/C/SR.160, and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/45/38), paras. 167–213. For the second periodic report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/UK/2 and Amend.1; for its consideration by the Committee, see CEDAW/C/SR.223 and *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/48/38), paras. 523–589. For the third periodic report submitted by the Government of the United Kingdom, see CEDAW/C/UK/3 and Add.1 and 2.

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the United Kingdom's fourth report on the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In continuing partnership with non-governmental organisations and other public bodies, the United Kingdom Government is more than ever committed to implementation of the Convention, both in letter and in spirit.

While the report of course covers the period since publication of the last report in July 1995, since the Labour Government was elected in May 1997 we have taken great strides forward. There is new machinery to address women's needs, through a Minister for Women in the Cabinet; a new Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office, in the heart of Government; and a Cabinet sub-committee responsible for ensuring that the whole of Government takes into account women's needs and aspirations. Since the election, women are much better represented in Parliament and the Government, and we have committed ourselves to the principle of 50/50 representation of women in public appointments. 39% of appointments made in 1997-98 were women and there are currently 22 ministers who are women.

We have also comprehensively reviewed policies for education, women's employment, health and childcare, and introduced significant changes to enable women to achieve their full potential, balance home and work commitments and to live rich and rewarding lives. But we recognise that there is much still to do, and we are setting new and challenging goals for the future.

In the formal presentation and examination on this report we look forward to explaining how our commitment will be taken forward and to elaborating on the progress so far.

The Rt Hon the Baroness Jay of Paddington
Minister for Women

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INTRODUCTION

The election of the Labour Government in May 1997 brought a determination by the new administration to improve the position of women. Central to this aim was the establishment of a new Women's Unit to support the Ministers for Women. These are the Rt. Hon. the Baroness Jay, Leader of the House of Lords and a member of the Cabinet and the Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell who is Minister for Public Health and the House of Commons spokesperson on women's issues.

The Women's Unit is based in the Cabinet Office at the heart of government. It works across government, contributing the women's perspective to the wider government agenda. Its aim is to listen to women's concerns, to reflect and promote their concerns within government and in turn to communicate effectively what the government is doing to meet those concerns.

This fourth CEDAW report surveys the progress so far. While it addresses, as it must, the particular articles of the Convention; it is first and foremost a record of what has happened on women's issues right across the UK, concentrating in particular on the period since May 1997. It is necessarily a very detailed and thorough document but what stands out above the detail is the very high level of commitment throughout all aspects of government to the principles of the Convention. Equality for women and equal treatment are at the heart of government thinking and delivery in every area. In health, education, financial policy and social security, radical changes have already been made to ensure that the impact on women of any policy is not only recognised but taken into account. Of course there is no room for complacency and this report shows that the UK is striving ever harder for more and better.

In the compilation of the report the UK Government has of course drawn extensively on information provided from within its various departments. But in the spirit of communication and listening, it has also consulted with the Equal Opportunities Commission and non-governmental organisations. It has asked for views on where government should be more pro-active, what more needs to be done and what the priorities should be. In response to that consultation a number of new initiatives are now under way. The Women's Unit is focusing and concentrating its resources on projects which cut right across the traditional responsibilities of government departments, such as violence against women, women's incomes over their lifetime and a study into the influences on teenage girls.

One of the most significant constitutional developments since the May 1997 election has been the decision to devolve a degree of power and responsibility for government to newly elected representative bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This provides opportunities for the women's agenda to be separately addressed in all parts of the country. So for the first time this CEDAW report specifically outlines how the Convention principles are or will be applied in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The report follows the recommended UN format of addressing the issues in each article of the Convention. Because this fourth report is to be examined together with the earlier third report published in 1995, where possible repetition has been avoided. However, it is a reflection of the level of activity in the areas covered by the Convention that much has indeed moved on. The report accordingly covers -

- new legislation and that which is planned as well as developments in the courts;
- new policies across government in vital areas such as health, education, employment and social policy;
- new government initiatives which have an impact on the application of the Convention principles;
- significant changes since 1995; and
- details on Reservations and Declarations made by the UK.

This CEDAW report continues the UK Government's fulfilment of its obligations to the United Nations. The publication "Delivering for Women: Progress so far" (published in November 1998) fulfils the commitment, made in 1995 at Beijing, to report regularly on progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. A forward looking action plan is due for publication during 1999. Both will be regularly updated. Continued compliance with the Convention and a determination to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women are themes running through UK Government policy. This report, taken together with those publications, reflects the strategies, the aspirations and above all the achievements of the UK Government.

PART 1 :

GENERAL BACKGROUND, COMPLIANCE WITH, IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE CONVENTION

a. Describe as concisely as possible the actual, general, economic, political and legal framework within which the United Kingdom approaches the elimination of discrimination against women in all its forms, as defined in the Convention.

b. Describe any legal and other measures adopted to implement the Convention, or their absence, as well as any effects which ratification of the Convention has had on the United Kingdom's actual, general, social, economic, political and legal framework since entry into force of the Convention for the United Kingdom.

c. Describe whether there are any institutions or authorities which have as their task to ensure that the principle of equality between men and women is complied with in practice, and what remedies are available to women who have discovered discrimination.

d. Describe the means used to promote and ensure the full development and advancement of women for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in all fields on a basis of equality with men.

e. Describe whether the provisions of the Convention can be invoked before, and directly enforced by, the courts, other tribunal or administrative authorities or whether the provisions of the Convention have to be implemented by way of internal laws or administrative regulations in order to be enforced by the authorities concerned.

Care needs to be taken when reading the report as the facts and figures can be for the United Kingdom as a whole, England and Wales, England only or for the constituent parts of the UK.

GENERAL FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE UK

Over half of the UK population are women, yet women are still very much in the minority in public life. The Government is determined to create more opportunity for everyone, removing obstacles to achievement wherever they exist.

There are currently 29.9 million women in the UK compared with 28.8 million men. Women make up 51% of the population. However, men outnumber women until they reach their mid-forties, when the numbers become more or less equal. For those aged 85 and over, there are 3 women to every man.

56% of adult women in Great Britain are married; 5% are cohabiting; 18% are single; 14% are widowed; 6% are divorced and 2% are separated. Single women make up the majority of women aged 16-24 but this proportion falls sharply as age increases. Only 8% of women aged 34-44 are single; most women in this age group are married (73%). Just over a third of women aged 65-75 are widowed but the likelihood of being widowed increases with age: nearly two thirds of women aged 75 and over are widowed.

Around 29% of women have a child under the age of 16 in the UK. Around eight in ten mothers have either one or two children and one in five mothers is a lone parent.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Trends

The proportion of women in the labour force has been increasing and this trend is likely to continue. In 1971 women aged 16-59 made up 38% of the labour force compared with 53% in 1998 (these figures refer to GB only).

Participation in the labour market

Over 12 million women aged 16 and over are economically active in Great Britain. This represents just over half of all women. Forty per cent of women of working age have dependent children and their overall activity rate is 65% compared with 76% for women without children aged under 16. Economic activity rates are lowest for younger mothers with children aged 0-4 and highest for older mothers with children aged 11-15.

Between 1984 and 1998 the employment rate for white women in Great Britain has increased by 10% compared with an increase of 4% for ethnic minority women in the same period. (these figures refer to GB only). Ethnic minority women are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts; the unemployment rate for ethnic minority women aged 16 and over in Great Britain is 18% compared with 8% for white women.

In 1998 the average hourly earnings of full-time women employees of working age were £8.22 - around 80% of men's earnings (£10.26). The average gross weekly earnings for women in 1998 were £309.60 - 72% of men's earnings (£427.10) (these figures refer to GB only).

Occupations

47% of employed men aged 16-64 are in non-manual employment, 53% are in manual employment. 60% of employed women aged 16-64 are in non-manual employment, 40% are in manual employment. (these figures refer to GB only).

Although the number of women employed in many managerial and professional occupations has increased, they still represent only 32% of managers and administrators and 35% of health professionals.

In senior posts, the under-representation of women is even more marked with, for example, 91% of judges being men and almost 82% of MPs.

Working patterns

92% of all women who work are employees and 7% are self-employed.

About 80% of all people of working age who work part-time are women. Some 44% of women in employment work part-time.

34% of women with dependent children work part-time compared with 21% of women without dependent children.

Qualifications

Women's educational attainment relative to men's has improved in recent years.

20% of women have no educational qualifications but 12% have a higher/degree qualification. Among men, 15% have no qualification at all while 15% have a higher/degree qualification (these figures refer to GB only).

The proportion of women in full-time higher education increased by 158% between 1980/1981 and 1994/1995, compared with an 83% increase amongst men. Over the same period the proportion of women in part-time higher education increased by 288%, compared with a 31% increase amongst men (*Separate Tables, Statistics on Women and Men in Education, Training and Employment, DfEE, 1997*).

The number of women students in education has increased by 49% compared with a growth of 38% for men.

CHILDCARE

Hard data about the availability of childcare in the UK is patchy. A national baseline survey instituted as part of the Government's National Childcare Strategy will identify the forms of childcare currently being used and the extent of unmet demand. Some £12 million is being made available to local authorities to audit childcare provision and potential demand from parents and employers locally.

Affordability

The cost of daycare to a parent can vary from as little as £15 a week for an out-of-school club to £260 a week for a nanny.

The Family Policy Studies Centre estimates that the overall amount Britain spends on childcare is over £20 billion a year. Nearly two fifths of this amount is funded by parents and families.

Expenditure on Childcare (£bn per year)

Public Sector	12.2
Employers	0.2
Voluntary sector	0.2
Parents and families	8.2
Total	£20.8 bn

Availability

There are about 11.5 million children under 16 in Great Britain, living in about 6.5 million families. Almost half live in households where both parents are in employment.

Parents with children under five are most likely to have their children cared for by a relative or a childminder. Those with older children tend to work school hours or use informal childcare sources. However, the majority of children are still cared for by a family member.

The table below shows the number of formal childcare places available in England in March 1997:

Type of Service	Number of Places
Childminders	365,000
Day Nurseries	194,000
Playgroups	384,000
Holiday Schemes*	209,000
Out of School Clubs*	79,000
Total Places	1,231,000

Source: Children's Daycare Facilities at 31 March 1997 England; Department of Health 1998. Base: England only
** for 5-7 year olds only*

Growing Demand

The Daycare Trust estimates that in the UK there are 800,000 "latchkey" children under age 12 who go home on their own after school.

Numbers of women in the workforce are growing. Between 1987 and 1997, the proportion of mothers with dependent children who were in paid work rose from 52% to 62%, and by Spring 2011 women are expected to account for 1.3 million of the projected rise of 1.7 million in the British labour force.

Qualifications of childcare workers

Many childcare workers are unqualified. An Interim report from extensive workforce surveys, supported by the Government, gathering information on the characteristics of the workforce, their qualifications and training needs, covering private day nurseries, childminders, playgroups, pre-schools and out of school clubs was published in December 1998, with a full report due in March 1999.

A draft national qualifications and training framework for early education, childcare and playwork was issued for consultation in November 1998. The consultation ended in January 1999 and the final framework will be in place from Summer 1999.

CRIME

Domestic Violence

The British Crime Survey found that 44% of all violent crimes in 1995 were cases of domestic violence.

The cost to London local authorities of responding to domestic violence has been estimated at £278 million a year. This estimate has been achieved by an examination of service provision and an estimation of levels of prevalence.

BODIES CHARGED WITH PROMOTING EQUALITY

Equal Opportunities Commission

The Equal Opportunities Commission for Great Britain (EOC) was set up in 1975 under the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. It has a statutory duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity between men and women; and to review the workings of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equal Pay Act 1970. It is funded by the Government (£5.792 million for the 1998-9 financial year) and has offices in Manchester, London, Glasgow and Cardiff.

Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland

There is a separate Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland which was established in 1976. It broadly mirrors the functions of the EOC(GB). Government funding for the EOC(NI) in 1998-99 is £1.52m. Under the Northern Ireland Act 1998 it is proposed to establish a unified Equality Commission, bringing together the current statutory bodies. The Equality Commission will also have a statutory duty to oversee and monitor public authorities in carrying out their functions to promote equality of opportunity. This obligation is between those of different religious and political beliefs, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status and responsibility for dependants.

EOC assistance to individuals

The EOC is empowered under the Sex Discrimination Act to assist an individual complainant in certain specified circumstances, for instance in cases where an issue of principle is at stake; where it is unreasonable to expect the individual to deal with the case unaided; or where some other special consideration applies. In such cases the Commission's assistance includes the giving of legal advice; seeking a settlement; arranging for legal advice, assistance or representation; or any form of assistance the Commission considers appropriate.

EOC recommendations for improvements to the law

Under section 53(1)(c) of the Sex Discrimination Act, the EOC has a duty to keep under review the workings of that Act and the Equal Pay Act. The Government has welcomed the EOC's latest proposals to amend the legislation, which it received in November 1998, as a contribution to thinking on the promotion of equality between women and men.

The main elements of the recommendations are:

- revising sex equality laws into a single statute with a positive right to equal treatment;

- requiring employers to monitor the make-up and pay of their workforce and make information available to the EOC;

- requiring all public bodies to promote equality of opportunity including all public appointments; and

- allowing class or representative actions to be brought in sex discrimination cases to tribunals and a number of other changes to tribunal procedures and time limits.

CONSULTATIONS WITH WOMEN

Women's National Commission (WNC)

The WNC is a key partner in the Government's consultations with women. It consists of 50 women's organisations with a combined membership of more than 8 million women throughout the UK. Acting as the central contact point for co-ordinating and disseminating information, organising seminars and meetings, and holding working groups, the Commission also produces policy papers and liaises between government departments and women's organisations on matters of concern. It stimulates debate among its constituent organisations in order to increase their influence on public policy and to ensure that the views of women are brought to the attention of government.

The Government carried out a review of the WNC which ended in June 1998. The terms of reference of the review were: *'To examine the objectives, membership and the funding of the WNC in the light of the Government's need to ensure that there is an effective, efficient, independent channel of communication between women's organisations and Government for the 21st century. To assess costs and benefits. To develop, if appropriate, options for change'.*

In parallel, the WNC carried out its own internal review and the views obtained from WNC member organisations contributed to the Government review.

The recommendations of the review are being implemented to enable the WNC to become a more focused, responsive and influential organisation; to be better able to represent the views of a broader spectrum of women's organisations, and thereby a greater range of women; and be in direct communication with Government.

Some of the changes that were proposed were that:

- as a Non-Departmental Public Body, the WNC will agree its annual work programme with the Minister for Women which will address both the priorities of the member organisations and of the Government, and will be held accountable to the Minister for the achievement of targets and objectives;

- the role of the Government Co-Chair of the WNC should cease and be replaced by regular meetings between the WNC and Government; and

- full membership of the WNC should be expanded.

More generally, the Women's National Commission has a role to stimulate debate among women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in order to increase their influence on public policy and to ensure that the views of women are brought before the Government. In co-operation with both the EOC and the EOC for Northern Ireland (to be incorporated into the Equality Commission), the WNC has produced a National Agenda for Action which is based on the Beijing Global Platform for Action. In June 1997 the WNC published 'Growing up female in the UK' inspired by the Global Platform's 'Girl Child'. Post Beijing, the WNC obtained Consultative Status with ECOSOC at the UN and so brings UN materials to women and to women's organisations of the UK, and organises responses from them.

Listening to women

In November 1998 the Minister for Women announced a new programme of consultation with women, designed to reach those women whose voices are not always heard, and who are not members of representative organisations.

There are four main elements to this programme:

- a series of regional events where women will have the opportunity to discuss issues of concern and interest with the Ministers for Women;
- qualitative research, particularly among women who are excluded from conventional forms of dialogue with the Government;
- a 'postcard campaign' whereby women will be invited to send their views to the Ministers for Women; and
- a major conference of NGOs to share views.

This programme will take place in the first half of 1999 and the results will inform the work of the Women's Unit, the priorities of the Ministers for Women, and feed into a wide range of Government initiatives.

BASELINE INFORMATION

Research into women's attitudes

The Women's Unit is committed to tracking women's attitudes and publishing regular reports on the issues women raise. A first report, *Researching Women's Attitudes*, was published in November 1998. It drew on already published material, including the Government's People's Panel and opinion polls and attitude surveys, to highlight the distinctive concerns of women. It showed, *inter alia*, that while men and women were broadly interested in the same issues, women express more interest and concern over, for example, health and education than men, whose priority tends to be the economy.

The Women's Unit plans further qualitative and quantitative research to monitor these attitudes and ensure they are drawn to the attention of all parts of the Government.

Publications

Since 1995, the UK Government has produced a number of publications which attempt to identify the data available for policy appraisal for gender mainstreaming, as well as to highlight the gaps which need to be filled. *The Social Focus* series of publications paint statistical pictures of society by looking at different groups of people. *Social Focus on Women* was published in 1995 and *A Social Focus on Women and Men,* produced by the EOC and the Office for National Statistics, was published in Autumn 1998. The latter draws together gender disaggregated statistics on a wide range of topics to paint a statistical picture of, and including the differences between, women and men in the UK.

Gender and Statistics

The Government recognises that the production and dissemination of gender-disaggregated statistics is a precondition for researching and monitoring the development of gender issues which cover all aspects of society and the policy-making process.

The UK's Government Statistical Service (GSS) has taken an active lead in pursuing this goal, working with others across Government and beyond, in developing gender-related statistics and making them more easily accessible.

In 1997, the UK GSS agreed a new policy statement on the collection and dissemination of statistics disaggregated by gender: *'The GSS aims always to collect and make available, for example in publications, statistics disaggregated by gender, except where considerations of practicality or cost outweigh the identified need. All GSS publications contain the name and contact details of a person who can explain which, if any, of the statistics are available by gender and how they can be obtained.'*

A Brief Guide to Gender Statistics was published in March 1998 by the Office for National Statistics and the Equal Opportunities Commission. It reviews the main sources of gender statistics by broad topic area, describes the main sources, and provides a subject index. It covers both official and non-official sources, and has been widely praised by statistics users for its value in identifying data available as well as in pinpointing some gaps.

Gender and Statistics Conference and Gender Statistics User Group

In March 1998, a wide range of statistics users attended a one-day conference to launch a Gender Statistics User Group. The conference heard a keynote speech from the Minister for Women and included a range of other speakers from the UK and abroad.

The purpose of the conference was to establish a new Gender Statistics User Group and help set the agenda for such a group. It was initiated by the Statistics Users Council and Equal Opportunities Commission, with support from the Office for National Statistics, the Women's Unit and other government departments.

FORTHCOMING LEGISLATION

This is discussed below as appropriate, under the relevant Articles. Key measures to be introduced into Parliament in the 1998/99 Parliamentary session include :

Fairness at Work

A Bill setting out new rights and regulation-making powers in relation to maternity and parental leave, implementing EU provisions on part-time working, and introducing new rights for employees, including greater protection against unfair dismissal (see Article 11).

Welfare Reform Bill

To make it compulsory for all non-working claimants of working age to attend an interview to discuss the range of help and support available to them, introduce changes to Incapacity Benefit and Widows' Benefits, and set out a framework for a new stakeholder pension (see Article 11).

Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Bill

To speed up the way the criminal justice system deals with young offenders, allow special measures for witnesses not to face defendants in the courtroom, and modify the law allowing inferences to be drawn from suspects who choose to remain silent. While a general measure, this new law will be especially welcome to women victims of violent crime. (see Article 2)

Policy Appraisal and Equal Treatment

The Government is determined to ensure that the women's perspective is taken into account in all aspects of its business. In the formulation, development and implementation of government policy, the potential impact on both women in general and, where appropriate, groups of women in particular must always considered. This is also known as mainstreaming.

In May 1998 the Ministers for Women launched a mainstreaming initiative across the Government. The initiative was launched to an audience of senior civil servants and women's organisations and marked the beginning of a new partnership between women and Government.

Guidance on policy appraisal for equal treatment has been available since 1992 but in November 1998 new guidelines were issued jointly by the Home Office. This simple, user friendly guidance explains the relevant legislation and summarises the processes required to ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people of different races and disabled people. It is supported by detailed departmental guidance and training material for those employed in the day to day business of policy making.

The new guidelines emphasise the need for consultation with women and women's groups. The Women's National Commission (WNC) and the Women's Unit (WU) are working together to raise the profile of the consultation process across Government and with the organisations who might expect to be consulted. They guidelines also contain practical examples of the integration of the women's perspective into both policy and the design of delivery. They include, for example, targets for increasing the numbers of women in public appointments.

A monitoring system is being designed to ensure that progress is reported on an annual basis and regular events are planned to maintain the profile of the initiative.

In Northern Ireland there are separate arrangements on policy appraisal and mainstreaming. It is proposed to place a statutory obligation on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity, implemented through statutory equality schemes.

All Party Group on Sex Equality

In November 1997 an all party group on sex equality was established. Its overall terms of reference are to work towards the achievement of sex equality as a fundamental human right for all.

The principal objective of the group is to keep sex quality issues before Parliament by:

- keeping members informed of relevant and topical issues related to sex equality;
- giving members the pointers to scrutinise relevant Bills at relevant stages: and
- getting members to put down Parliamentary questions as appropriate.

ENFORCING PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION

The provisions of the Convention cannot be invoked directly but are implemented through national legislation as described above and in further detail under Article 2 and elsewhere in the report.

RESERVATIONS and DECLARATIONS

The UK's third report contained a list of the Reservations and Declarations made by the UK which were due to be withdrawn. These were withdrawn in 1995 and 1996. In the process of producing this report, the remaining reservations were carefully examined with the aim of withdrawing them. This is not possible at this time. However, all Reservations will be kept under constant review with the aim of withdrawing them as soon as possible.

The remaining reservations are:

a) The United Kingdom understands the main purpose of the Convention, in the light of the Definition contained in Article 1, to be the reduction, in accordance with its terms, of discrimination against women, and does not therefore regard the Convention as imposing any requirement to reveal or modify any existing laws, regulations, customs or practices which provide for women to be treated more favourably than men, whether temporarily or in the longer term; the United Kingdom's undertakings under Article 4, paragraph 1, and other provisions of the Convention are to be construed accordingly.

c) In the light of the definition contained in Article 1, the United Kingdom's ratification is subject to the understanding that none of its obligations under the Convention shall be treated as extending to the succession to, or possession and enjoyment of, the Throne, the peerage, titles of honour, social precedence or armorial bearings, or as extending to the affairs of religious denominations or orders or to the admission into or service in the armed forces of the Crown.

d) The United Kingdom reserves the right to continue to apply such immigration legislation governing entry into, stay in and departure from the United Kingdom as it may deem necessary from time to time and, accordingly, its acceptance of Article 15(4) and of the other provisions of the Convention is subject to the provisions of any such legislation as regards persons not at the time having the right under the law of the United Kingdom to enter and remain in the United Kingdom.

Article 9

The British Nationality Act 1981, which was brought into force with effect from January 1983, is based on principles which do not allow of any discrimination against women within the meaning of Article 1 as regards acquisition, change or retention of their nationality or as regards the nationality of their children. The United Kingdom's acceptance of Article 9 shall not, however, be taken to invalidate the continuation of certain temporary or transitional provisions which will continue in force beyond that date.

Article 11

The United Kingdom reserves the right to apply all United Kingdom legislation and the rules of pension schemes affecting retirement pensions, survivors' benefits and other benefits in relation to death or retirement (including *retirement on grounds of redundancy), whether or not derived from a social security scheme.*

This reservation will apply equally to any future legislation which may modify or replace such legislation, or the rules of pension schemes, on the understanding that the terms of such legislation will be compatible with the United Kingdom's obligations under the Convention.

The United Kingdom reserves the right to apply the following provisions of United Kingdom legislation concerning the benefits specified:

b) Increases of benefits for adult dependants under sections 44 to 47,49 and 66 of the Social Security Act 1975 and under sections 44 to 47, 49 and 66 of the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Act 1975;

The United Kingdom reserves the right to apply any non-discriminatory requirement for a qualifying period of employment or insurance for the application of the provisions contained in Article 11 (2).

Article 15
In relation to Article 15, paragraph 3, the United Kingdom understands the intention of this provision to be that only those terms or elements of a contract or other private instrument which are discriminatory in the sense described are to be deemed null and void, but not necessarily the contract or instrument as a whole.

Article 16
As regards paragraph 1(f) of article 16, the United Kingdom does not regard the reference to the paramountcy of the interests of the children as being directly relevant to the elimination of discrimination against women, and declares in this connection that the legislation of the United Kingdom regulating adoption, while giving a principal position to the promotion of the children's welfare, does not give to the child's interests the same paramount place as in issues concerning custody over children.

PART 2 : ARTICLE 1

ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

For the purposes of the present Convention, the term "discrimination against women" shall mean any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

See other Articles.

ARTICLE 2 :

LEGAL PROVISIONS

States Parties condemn discrimination against women in all its forms, agree to pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating discrimination against women and, to this end, undertake:

a. *To embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation if not yet incorporated therein and to ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realisation of this principle;*

b. *To adopt appropriate legislation and other measures, including sanctions where appropriate, prohibiting all discrimination against women;*

c. *To establish legal protection of the rights of women on an equal basis with men and to ensure through competent national tribunals and other public institutions the effective protection of women against any act of discrimination;*

d. *To refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation;*

e. *To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation or enterprise;*

f. *To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women;*

g. *To repeal all national penal provisions which constitute discrimination against women.*

LEGAL CHANGES

The baseline position

As set out in previous reports, the objectives of the Convention are given effect in the UK through provisions of national law, in particular the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, each as amended. These laws operate in England, Scotland and Wales. Similar equal pay and sex discrimination legislation operates in Northern Ireland. They are the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 and the Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 made sex discrimination unlawful in employment, vocational training and education. The Act also makes it unlawful for any person concerned with the provision of goods, facilities or services to the public to discriminate on the grounds of sex and also protects against sex discrimination in the management and disposal of property. The law does not apply to transactions of a purely private and personal nature, for example private clubs. It does not apply to Ministers of Religion, nor to voluntary bodies in certain circumstances, nor where the sex of a person is a genuine occupational requirement for a job. It gives individuals complaining of sex discrimination the right of direct access to employment tribunals or civil courts. The Equal Pay Act gives employees the right to bring complaints seeking equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent and work of equal value.

To meet the UK's obligations under European Community law the Sex Discrimination Act 1986 extended the law to cover all employers, including those with 5 or fewer employees. The Act also made it unlawful to compel a woman to retire from employment at a different age from a comparable male employee. The Pensions Act 1995 began work on equalising the provision of pensions for men and women.

In addition, the Employment Act 1989 and Northern Ireland equivalents reduced the extent of the exceptions from the prohibition on discrimination on the grounds of sex in employment. In the fields of employment and vocational training, the law on sex discrimination now generally overrides discriminatory requirements imposed by or under legislation enacted before the Sex Discrimination Act.

The employment provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay Act apply to Government Departments and other public sector bodies in the same way that they apply to those in the private sector. Further information about the way in which the Civil Service promotes equal opportunities is provided under Article 7.

LEGISLATION INTRODUCED SINCE THE LAST REPORT

Human Rights Act 1998

In 1998, Parliament passed the Human Rights Act. The Act incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights into English law, thereby allowing UK citizens, who believe their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights have been infringed, to argue their case before a UK court (for further details, see Article 3).

Sex Discrimination Act (amended 1996)

In 1996 the Government amended Section 66 (3) of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to remove the bar on Employment Tribunals awarding compensation to a complainant where there had been indirect discrimination and where that discrimination was not intentional. Tribunals are now able to award compensation to people who have suffered indirect discrimination.

Protection from Harassment 1997

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 came into force in June 1997. It creates two new criminal offences - causing harassment and causing fear of violence. If a person causes harassment or fear of violence through a course of conduct (i.e. on more than one occasion), they are committing an offence under the Act. A restraining order which prohibits the offender from further specified acts is also available to the courts; such an order is available even if an offender is in prison. The Act also recognises the civil wrong (tort) of harassment, enabling a victim to apply for an injunction in the civil courts. As from 1 September 1998, breach of such an injunction can lead to the issuing of a warrant for arrest, and stiffer punishment than is otherwise available through contempt of court proceedings.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is not specifically defined in existing legislation. Since 1986, it has been clear that sexual harassment can, in certain circumstances, amount to sex discrimination and give rise to a claim under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. People, particularly women, continue to bring such cases to tribunals on a regular basis, and to receive compensation. In some cases, sexual harassment may also amount to unlawful assault and give rise to civil or criminal liability. The EOC has recommended that the prohibition of sexual harassment in employment should be expressly mentioned in the Sex Discrimination Act.

Since 1986, it has been clear that sexual harassment can, in certain circumstances, amount to sex discrimination and give rise to a claim under the Sex Discrimination Act. People, particularly women, continue to bring such cases to tribunals on a regular basis, and to receive compensation. In some cases, sexual harassment may also amount to unlawful assault and give rise to civil or criminal liability.

Sexual Offences

The Government has made a number of legislative changes to enhance the protection given to women from serious sexual assaults and rape in England and Wales. Under Part 1 of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 there is a requirement imposed on those convicted of sex offences against children and other serious sex offences, including all cases of rape, to notify the police of their name and address and any changes to these. The duration of the requirement to register will depend on the length of the sentence, and a sentence of 30 months or more will attract a lifelong requirement. Failure to register will be an offence punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment.

The registration requirement will ensure that the information held on convicted sex offenders will be fully up to date, will help the police identify possible suspects in a future offence and act as a deterrent to potential re-offenders. It will also mean that the police can learn when a convicted sex offender moves into an area and take steps to protect the vulnerable where necessary. Although the Sex Offenders Act is primarily intended to target paedophiles, the most serious sexual offences involving adults are included - not just rape but those cases of indecent assault where a sentence of 30 months or more is imposed.

Furthermore, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made provision for Sex Offender Orders which became available from 1 December 1998. The police are now able to apply for an order if the defendant already has a previous conviction for a sexual offence (i.e. one of those listed in Schedule 1 to the Sex Offenders Act 1997), and if his actions are such as to give the police concern that an order is necessary to protect the public from serious harm from him. The order is a civil one, which prohibits the defendant from doing what is specified in the Order (e.g. lingering outside a school or a play-ground). It will remain in force for a minimum of five years, and will attract an obligation to comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 if the defendant was not already subject to those requirements. A breach of the sex offender order will attract very stiff penalties, which could include a prison sentence of up to five years.

The Crime (Sentences) Act 1997 introduced automatic life sentences for those convicted for a second time of a serious violent or sexual offence. The list of qualifying offences for which a second offence will mean an automatic life sentence being imposed includes rape, attempted rape and intercourse with a girl aged under 13. The Act also increased the maximum penalties for indecent conduct towards a young child and indecent assault by a male on a juvenile to ten years imprisonment.

Review of sexual offences and penalties

In January 1999, the Home Office also announced the terms of reference for the review of sexual offences. The UK Government believes that the law needs to be able to reflect today's knowledge and to provide effective protection for individuals. The review aims to ensure that the sexual offences and penalties meet the needs ofd society today. Much of the law at present dates from a hundred years ago and more, society was very different.

The Government believes it is necessary that the law on sexual offences should be clear and coherent so as to protect the citizen, particularly the more vulnerable, from abuse and exploitation. It must enable abusers to be brought to justice. The review will also ensure that the sexual offences are fair and non-discriminatory; the offences and penalties will have to comply with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Family Law Act 1996

This Act is underpinned by three broad principles:

- that the institution of marriage is to be supported;
- that parties to a marriage which may have broken down are to be encouraged to take all practicable steps, whether by marriage counselling or otherwise, to save the marriage; and
- that where a marriage has irretrievably broken down, it should be brought to an end with the minimum of distress to the parties and to the children affected; and in such a way as to promote as good a continuing relationship between the parties and any children affected as is possible in the circumstances.

Part IV of the Act (implemented with effect from October 1997) concerns domestic violence and occupation of the family home. It provides a single, consistent set of remedies available to all courts with family jurisdiction. Two types of order are available: non-molestation orders, to prevent the respondent from molesting the applicant or a relevant child; and occupation orders, which can, for example, decide who is allowed to occupy the home and exclude the respondent from the applicant's home or an area around it.

The Act broadens the definition of those in family relationships. Under the previous law, only current spouses and cohabitants could apply for non-molestation orders. A much wider range of people (e.g. divorcees, cohabitees, certain relatives or those who have accepted a form of parental responsibility for a child) are now able to apply for orders under Part IV of the Act.

Police powers to deal with domestic violence have also been strengthened. Where the court makes an occupation order or non-molestation order and it appears to the court that the respondent has used or threatened violence against the applicant or a relevant child, then the court must attach a power of arrest unless it is satisfied that the applicant or child will be adequately protected without such a power.

In Scotland, family law is currently being reviewed. A consultation exercise will be undertaken in early 1999 with a view to making recommendations to the new Scottish Parliament. The Consultation paper will invite comments on a number of proposed changes to divorce and family law including the grounds for divorce, the fair distribution of matrimonial property on divorce and arrangements for the care of any children. Proposals are based on the principle that the state and the courts should only intervene in the family, if parents are unable to exercise their responsibilities and rights, and if to intervene is in the best interest of the child. However, the paper does propose the modification or parental responsibilities and rights where there has been violence in the relationship.

National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage Act received Royal Assent in July 1998. A statutory national minimum wage will take effect from April 1999, marking an important step towards greater decency and fairness in the workplace. It will also do much to ease pay discrimination since of the nearly 2 million people who will benefit from the minimum wage, some 1.3 million will be women.

The adult rate for the National Minimum Wage will be £3.60 per hour. The rate will not vary by region, industry or size of firm. It will apply to all workers whether full-time or part-time, whether a permanent, temporary or casual worker, or a home-worker. Young people aged 18 to 21 will be paid an initial rate of £3.00 an hour, rising to £3.20 an hour in June 2000 for 18-20 year olds. The Low Pay Commission will be asked to look again at the position of 21 year olds in 1999 to consider what rate they should receive in 2000.

Workers aged 22 and over taking up a new job with a new employer, will be paid a development rate of £3.20 an hour for the first six months, providing they are undertaking 'accredited training; after which they will be entitled to the full minimum rate of £3.60 an hour. All workers under 18 and apprentices under 26 in the first year of their apprenticeship will be exempted from the minimum wage.

The Low Pay Commission has been asked to evaluate the introduction and impact of the National Minimum Wage in respect of its effect on pay and pay structures, competitiveness, small firms, particular groups of workers including women, pay differentials and training.

Armed Forces

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Application to Armed Forces etc.) Regulations 1994 came into effect in February 1995. The Act was amended so as to apply to the armed forces; exclusions from the Act are now permitted only for the purpose of maintaining combat effectiveness of the naval, military or air forces.

Employment Rights (Disputes Resolution) Act 1998

The Employment Rights (Disputes Resolution) Act 1998 received Royal Assent in April 1998. The Act is designed to modify employment tribunal procedures and encourage alternative methods of dispute resolution. It renames industrial tribunals "employment tribunals" and provides for an arbitration scheme through the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to deal with unfair dismissal disputes as a voluntary alternative to tribunal proceedings.

The law has also changed to allow tribunals discretion to seek an independent expert's report. Tribunals may also now set time-scales within which experts' reports should be completed.

The Social Chapter

The Government accepted the Social Chapter at the EU Amsterdam Council in June 1997 and has begun to implement the measures already agreed under it.

The **Parental Leave Directive** gives parents at work the right to 3 months' unpaid leave at the birth or adoption of a child. The **European Works Council Directives** require companies with at least 1000 employees in total, and at least 150 workers in two Member States, to establish structures for consulting workers on issues that affect them. The **Part-Time Work Directive** entitles part-time workers to the same pro-rata terms and conditions of employment as full-time workers, thereby removing any discrimination and improving the quality of part-time jobs. The first two of these were extended to the UK in December 1997 and the third in April 1998. The UK has two years to implement these Directives. The **Directive on the Burden of Proof in Sex Discrimination cases** will, once a prima facie case has been made, place the burden of proof on the defendant (usually the employer), who will need to demonstrate that sex discrimination has not occurred . This Directive was extended to the UK in June 1998 and the Government has three years to implement it.

Working Time Directive

Regulations implementing the European Working Time Directive came into force on 1 October 1998. The Regulations include a right for workers not to work over an average of 48 hours a week; entitlements to paid annual leave and daily, weekly and in-work rest periods and special limits on night workers. Adolescents i.e. those over the minimum school leaving age but under 18 will receive special protections.

Workers have a right to complain to an employment tribunal if they are being denied the entitlements to rest periods, breaks and paid annual leave. The working time and night work limits in the Regulations are enforced by the Health and Safety Executive.

Burden of Proof Directive

The Burden of Proof Directive was adopted in July 1998. The UK is committed to its implementation within three years. In essence it requires the reversal of the burden of proof in sex discrimination cases. However it is expected to make little difference in practice to how Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination cases are decided in the UK, since the UK system is already recognised as fulfilling the intentions of the Directive. The Equal Pay Act 1970 already requires that, as between persons doing equal work, where pay or contract terms are less favourable to one sex the employer bears the burden of showing the difference is due to factors unrelated to sex. In cases of *indirect* discrimination, both the Equal Pay Act and the Sex

Discrimination Act place a burden on the employer to justify any requirement or condition having a considerably greater adverse impact on one sex. In cases of *direct* discrimination, courts and tribunals have a well established practice of inferring discrimination from evidence which raises the possibility of discrimination, where the employer fails to provide an adequate explanation.

For further information on the Part Time Work Directive, see Article 11.

FORTHCOMING LEGISLATION

For proposed legislation to give effect to the Social Chapter, see Article 11.

Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Bill

The Bill includes a range of measures to assist vulnerable or intimidated witnesses give evidence in court following the recommendations in the report *Speaking Up for Justice*. These include:

- physical measures to reduce the stress of giving evidence at trial, including powers to clear the public gallery when the victim of a rape or serious sexual offence is giving evidence, screens to shield the witness from the defendant and giving evidence by live TV link;
- there will be a presumption that complainants in sexual offence trials should be eligible for such assistance;
- a change to the definition of who is competent to give evidence;
- further restrictions on publishing information which might reveal the identity of a witness;
- restrictions on the freedom of a defendant to personally cross-examine their alleged victim, including a mandatory ban in cases of rape and serious sexual offences; and
- further restrictions upon what evidence about an alleged victim's sexual behaviour can be considered relevant in a trial for serious sexual offences.

Further details of the report *Speaking Up for Justice* and support for victims in court are provided in Article 15.

A Scottish Office Working Group, whose membership comprises representatives from the Crown Office, Scottish Courts Administration, Victim Support and the Police has recently examined the whole issue of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses, including the treatment of rape victims in Scotland. The Group has produced a report entitled *Towards a Just Conclusion - Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses in Scottish Criminal and Civil Cases*, launched as a consultation paper in November 1998.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

ACAS is an independent statutory body, charged with the general duty of promoting the improvement of industrial relations. It was created in September 1974 and was given statutory powers under the Employment Protection Act 1975.

The activities in which ACAS is involved are currently:

- preventing and resolving disputes by providing conciliation, arbitration and advisory mediation to foster constructive relationships at work;
- conciliating in actual or potential complaints to Employment Tribunals;
- providing impartial information and advice on matters concerned with employment relationships;
- promoting good practice in employee relations.

In 1997, ACAS offered conciliation in almost 107,000 potential or actual employment tribunal complaints. Of all these cases, 39% were resolved by a conciliated settlement, 31% were withdrawn and only 30% resulted in a formal employment tribunal hearing.

Employment Tribunals (ET)

In 1995-96 employment tribunals cleared 4371 formal complaints about sex discrimination and equal pay. Many equal pay and sex discrimination disputes are settled without the need for a tribunal hearing because of the assistance of the EOC and ACAS which has the general duty of promoting the improvement of industrial relations. ACAS must, in the case of complaints brought under the Sex Discrimination or Equal Pay Acts, attempt to promote a settlement where the parties so request and/or where, with conciliation, there seems to be a possibility of settlement. In Northern Ireland the functions of ACAS are carried out by the Labour Relations Agency.

2.1 Cases brought under the Sex Discrimination Act in Great Britain 1994 - 1996

	Total cases	ACAS settled	Withdrawn	Successful at hearing	Dismissed	Disposed of otherwise
1995/96	3,677	1,464 (40%)	1,508 (41%)	218 (6%)	356 (10%)	131 (4%)
1994/95	4,052	1,005 (25%)	2,276 (57%)	340 (8%)	350 (9%)	81 (2%)

Source: ETS (Labour Market Trends, April 1997)
Table may not total 100% due to rounding.

Not all sex discrimination cases are brought by women - a 1992 survey of Information Technology applications found that 15% were brought by men.

In 1995/96, the Employment Tribunals dealt with 694 equal pay complaints and 3,677 sex discrimination complaints. This compares with 418 and 4,052 respectively for the year 1994/95. This small decline in the number of cases brought under the Sex Discrimination Act between those years followed a rise of 105% in 1994/95 from the total cases recorded in 1993/94. Moreover, despite a general fall in the total number of registered applications to employment tribunals from 88,910 in 1996/97 to 80,435 in 1997/98, the number of sex discrimination applications as a proportion of the total rose from 3.5% to 4.3% over the same period. Similarly, the number of registered race discrimination cases as a proportion of total registered cases rose from 2.2% in 1996/97 to 3.2% in 1997/98.

2.2 Cases brought under the Equal Pay Act in Great Britain 1994 - 1996

	Total Cases	ACAS settled	Withdrawn	Successful at hearing	Dismissed	Disposed of otherwise
1995/96	694	128 (18%)	456 (66%)	36 (5%)	46 (7%)	28 (4%)
1994/95	418	98 (23%)	286 (68%)	8 (2%)	17 (4%)	9 (2%)

Source :ETS (Labour Market Trends, April 1997)
Table may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

2.3 Cases brought under the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts in Northern Ireland Employment Tribunals 1995 - 1997

Year	Sex Discrimination Act	Equal Pay Act	Total
1995	978	244	1222
1996	838	58	896
1997	614	72	686

Source :Employment Tribunals Office, Department of Trade and Industry.

There was a 9% increase in the number of cases brought under the Sex Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland Employment Tribunals between 1995/1996 and 1996/1997. However Equal Pay Act cases fell by 60%, from 202 to 80 over the same period. The total number of cases brought fell by 24%, from 5,018 in 1995/96 to 3,805 in 1996/97. This indicates that as a proportion of total cases, those brought under the Sex Discrimination Act accounted for 12.5% in 1996/97, compared with 8.7% in 1995/96.

EOC Code of Practice on Equal Pay

The EOC's statutory *Code of Practice on Equal Pay* came into effect in March 1997. It aims to provide practical guidance and to promote good practice to those responsible for, or with an interest in, pay arrangements within a particular organisation, thus improving personnel and pay systems to the benefit of both women and men. It is based on the concept that the right to equal pay free of sex bias is conferred both under UK and European legislation. While the code is not legally binding on employers, as a statutory code it can be used in evidence in any proceedings taken before a Tribunal if the Tribunal considers that it is relevant to the equal pay case being heard. It constitutes a significant step in helping employers and employees to bridge the pay inequality gap.

Awareness of legal rights

The Government and its agencies are raising awareness of the provisions of sex discrimination and equal pay legislation. Publicity measures include Government-produced guides to the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, and guidance on sexual harassment at work and maternity rights. The Equal Opportunities Commission's wide range of information material includes guides to legislation. They provide employers, trainers and consultants with a regular information bulletin to keep them up to date on legislation and practical developments. Participation by Commission staff in seminars, speaking engagements and training sessions also helps to ensure that information on legal rights is passed on. The Government and Equal Opportunities Commission value media coverage of legal cases as a means of informing individuals of their legal rights and employers of their obligations. Attention devoted by the UK press to equal opportunity issues has raised awareness among a very large audience.

CRIMES COMMITTED BY WOMEN AND THE TREATMENT OF WOMEN OFFENDERS (PENAL PROVISIONS)

Crimes committed by women

Generally it appears that women commit fewer crimes of all types than men, and proportionally fewer serious and violent crimes than men. 7% of the female population have a conviction by the age of 29 as compared with 31% of men. Over the last ten years, for every one female between 3 and 4 males were cautioned or convicted in England and Wales for a criminal offence, other than a less serious (summary) motoring offence. In 1997, 219,000 men and 63,100 women were cautioned for an offence. In addition, 1,157,400 men and 217,100 women were convicted. Therefore, in total 1,376,400 men and 280,200 women were either cautioned or convicted.

Latest statistics show that a quarter of male offenders have a criminal career of over 10 years, while only 3% of female offenders have criminal careers lasting more than 10 years.

In England and Wales, one of the predominant offences for which females are dealt with by means of a conviction or caution is TV licence evasion – 24% of females in contrast to only 3% of males. Among the more serious, indictable, offences, the predominant female offences are theft and handling of stolen goods – 59% of serious offences in comparison with 36% for males.

2.4 Crimes committed by women between 1987 and 1997 in England and Wales

OFFENCE GROUP	1987		1997	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
VIOLENCE	6%	3%	6%	4%
SEXUAL	1%	-	1%	-
BURGLARY	8%	1%	5%	1%

ROBBERY	1%	-	1%	-
THEFT	26%	31%	18%	25%
FRAUD	2%	3%	2%	3%
CRIMINAL	2%	1%	1%	1%
DRUGS	2%	1%	11%	5%
NON-MOTORING	2%	1%	6%	3%
MOTORING	3%	-	1%	-
TV LICENCE (1)	5%	36%	3%	24%
OTHER NON-MOTORING	41%	23%	45%	34%
TOTAL OFFENCES	100% (844,100)	100% (204,100)	100% (808,600)	100% (206,500)

Source: Criminal Statistics 1997, Home Office

1. *Offence under Wireless Telegraphy Acts, which mainly comprise TV licence evasion.*

Treatment of crimes

Cautioning is the main disposal used for female offenders in England and Wales for the more serious indictable offences. In 1997, 52% of all females convicted or cautioned for an indictable criminal offence received a caution compared with 34% of males. This holds true for all age groups and most indictable offences and summary offences.

A statistical exercise carried out by the Home Office examined the criminal histories of samples of those cautioned in 1985, 1988, 1991 and 1994 in England and Wales. This showed that, while a majority of both sexes had no criminal history, cautioned males were twice as likely as females to have been cautioned previously.

There also large differences in the sentencing of men and women in England and Wales. In particular, women are far less likely than men to receive a custodial sentence for virtually all criminal offences. In 1996 the percentage of custodial sentences for first offences was 13% for men and 6% for women. The only exception was for drugs, for which the proportions were roughly equal at around 18%.

Women constitute a small proportion of all court prosecutions when compared with men. In 1996, 11% of all court prosecutions were female. During the period 1987-1996 this proportion remained static. Female prosecutions peaked in 1990 at 4,845 before declining to 3,787 in 1994. Small percentage increases took place during the two subsequent years.

The vast majority of people (89%) convicted at court are male. Across the three broad offence categories, indictable, summary and motoring, distributions between male and female convictions are very similar.

2.5 Offenders aged 21 and over sentenced, who received various sentences, by sex, 1997 in England and Wales

	Indictable Offences	Summary non-motoring offences (1)	All criminal excluding summary motoring offences

Type of sentence	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Discharge	14%	27%	10%	9%	12%	13%
Fine	32%	24%	81%	88%	61%	72%
Community Service	18%	31%	5%	2%	18%	9%
Fully Suspended sentence	1%	2%	-	-	1%	1%
Immediate custody	26%	13%	2%	-	12%	3%
Other	6%	3%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Total Sentenced	100% (186,600)	100% (30,300)	100% (260,500)	100% (91,800)	100% (447,100)	100% (122,100)

Source: Criminal Statistics 1997, Home Office
(1) Less serious offences triable at the lower tier magistrates' courts

When women receive a custodial sentence in England and Wales, their sentences tend to be shorter than those of men. In 1997 the average custodial sentence awarded at the upper tier Crown Court was 19.5 months for women aged 21 or over and 24.2 months for men. The average length was lower for females convicted of burglary, fraud and forgery, robbery, and theft and handling, drug offences and violence against the person, but higher for criminal damage.

Murder

The law on murder can already respond flexibility to the particular circumstances of domestic violence victims. In particular, the law on the defence of provocation has developed significantly in recent years.

While the Government keeps this area of the law under review it currently sees no need for a specific review of the provocation defence to murder. In particular, following the judgements from the Court of Appeal in the cases of *Ahluwalia (1992)* and *Humphries (1995)* it is clear that the court can take into account the particular way in which someone responds to provoking incidents, by taking account of the cumulative effect of prolonged abuse when assessing the impact of the final provoking incident.

Statistics on homicide indicate that the courts do respond to the particular circumstances of women charged with homicide. Female suspects indicted for murder of a current or former spouse, cohabitee or lover were less likely to be convicted of homicide (i.e. murder or manslaughter) than men - 69% of women compared to 94% of men over the period 1990-94 - and if convicted, women were less likely to be convicted of murder than men - one fifth as against two fifths. When sentenced for manslaughter, women were less likely to go to prison and were given shorter sentences.

WOMEN IN PRISON

Numbers of Women in Prison

Women form only a small proportion of the total prison population, 4.7% or 3,120 out of a total of 65,730 prisoners in England and Wales at the end of June 1998. The numbers and proportions have been rising, however, from a total of 1,580 female prisoners during 1992, when female prisoners accounted for 3.5% of the total prison population. The average number of sentenced females has increased by 72% from 1,190 in 1992 to 2,050 in 1997. One specific factor that has led to greater rates of imprisonment has been courts dealing with a greater number of women on serious drugs charges.

In Northern Ireland during 1997/98 there were 30 women prisoners (21 sentenced and 9 remand) and 5 female young offenders (under 21) all held at HMP Maghaberry.

In *Prison Statistics 1997*, there were 930 adult females discharged from prison in 1997, where the sentence was 12 months or more. Almost all of these would have been subject to post-release supervision by the probation service.

In Scotland, a report on women offenders, *A Safer Way* was recently published by the Social Work Services Inspectorate and HM Inspectorate of Prisons. The report made seven recommendations, six of which focus on ways of providing and supporting improved non-custodial criminal justice services for women offenders, including a recommendation that young women under 18 years of age who require a custodial environment should, by the year 2000, be held in local authority run secure accommodation, not in penal establishments. Action is being taken forward on all seven recommendations with a view to using the report as a basis for a new, fully integrated approach to dealing with women's offending.

Prison Places

There are 17 establishments within the prison service which hold women prisoners. A large increase in the number of women prisoners (a 13% increase from September 1997 to September 1998) has led to a need for additional accommodation for women. Three prisons are currently converting male to female accommodation: Durham, Low Newton and Send.

The Home Office advise that there are insufficient Welsh women prisoners to justify the building of women's prisons in Wales.

Differing needs of women

The Prison Service welcomed the publication in May 1997 *of HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' Thematic Review of Women in Prison*, which identified a number of areas of concern and made a useful contribution to the debate on how the penal system should approach the issue of women in prison.

The development of policies and constructive regimes which take account of the particular needs of women has been given a high priority, with a clear focus on the prevention of re-offending. Following a structural review of the Prison Service, the Women's Policy Group was set up at the beginning of 1998 to give direction to this work, as part of the new Prison Service Regimes Directorate. Its purpose is to develop regimes specifically for women prisoners, and to ensure that policy development reflects the needs of women prisoners.

Working in Partnership

The review concluded that prison sentence should not be seen in isolation, but as a means of preparing the prisoner for release and working to reduce the risk of re-offending in the future. The Women's Policy Group is determined to work closely with Governors and other practitioners in women's prisons, and is establishing new links with the Probation Service.

All young offenders and all adult women serving sentences of 12 months or over will be released on statutory supervision to the Probation Service. The Prison and Probation Services must work together in the sentence planning process, to assess risks and needs and to identify what work needs to be done both in prison and on supervision in the community afterwards. This will ensure a better chance for the prisoner in terms of resettlement and managing any risk that she might pose to victims or to the public.

Security

A consultation exercise has been undertaken to ensure that the special circumstances and needs of women and young offenders are reflected in the security categorisation system.

The Prison Service plans to provide multi-purpose variable security sites for women, as suggested by the Chief Inspector in his Thematic Review. It is intended to build such a prison at Ashford subject to successful planning application.

Piloting New Regimes

A high priority for the Women's Policy Group has been the development of improved regime pilots at Holloway and Styal prisons. £500,000 has been made available in each establishment for improved regimes that address the specific needs of female offenders. The Prison Service has set up pilot programmes to develop new, constructive regimes for women, young offenders and juveniles. Features of these will be an increased participation in regime activities including offending behaviour programmes, education, work, PE and recreation.

Offending Behaviour Programmes

The development of offending behaviour programmes is one of the most important and promising areas of regime development in women's prisons. A pro-active approach is being taken to reduce the risk of re-offending. Programmes that help prisoners to address their offending behaviour have been found to be very effective in reducing re-offending, and further development of programmes specifically designed for women is a priority. A number of flagship projects have been identified for priority development leading to accreditation. These include enhanced thinking skills; a programme for women who self-harm; a sex treatment programme; and a young offender programme. Other offending behaviour programmes, such as education with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, work and training for work will be important components of these regimes. An external research agency will carry out an evaluation of the impact on the women themselves.

Research has been commissioned to identify criminogenic factors in women, to adapt other offending behaviour programmes so that they are suitable for women and to develop new ones specifically addressing women's needs.

Training

A training pack has been developed for the Prison Service by the Trust for the Study of Adolescence for those staff who work specifically with young offenders.

Training of staff is another key area for development, with attention being given to the needs of new staff joining women's prisons and training for managers in women's prisons. A new training booklet for staff was published in 1997.

Managing Difficult Women

A small working group was set up to look at how the small number of difficult and disruptive women in prison might best be managed, capitalising on the expertise that already exists both in the Prison Service and in the mental health field. A consultation document will be issued to establishments in Spring 1999.

Young offenders

Concerns about the presence of juvenile girls in prisons, and the extent to which young offenders and adults mix, have been highlighted over recent years. Policies and practices in this area are being reviewed.

Foreign National Prisoners

The Prison Service appreciates the particular difficulties facing female foreign national prisoners with close family ties abroad and has introduced a number of measures to help these prisoners maintain meaningful links with their families abroad.

Foreign prisoners are exempt from the restrictions to the private cash allowance for the purposes of making phone calls; they may also be granted limited use of official telephones where there have been no visits in the previous few months. Governors are advised that in these circumstances special arrangements may be necessary to permit such prisoners to make calls to other countries.

Every establishment has access to Language Line which is a 24-hour telephone interpreting service.

The Foreign Prisoners Resource pack and the Prisoner Information book have been translated into a number of different languages.

Resettlement

Resettlement plans are crucial to the prevention of re-offending. Research shows that about 39% of women lose their homes as a result of imprisonment. Given the status of many as primary carers, the problems that need to be addressed are clear. The Prison Service works together with the National Association of the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) to train Prison Link Officers to help women to find accommodation prior to their release.

The arrangements for the release of prisoners on temporary licence recognise the needs of primary carers in a number of respects, for example allowing release for compassionate reasons to resolve urgent family or housing crises. The Government has recently announced a number of changes which extend the scope of temporary release, particularly for young offenders.

Work while in prison

Having a job is also one of the key factors in preventing re-offending. The Prison Service's Welfare to Work Programme, part of the Government's Welfare to Work Initiative, is being piloted at eleven establishments including one female prison (New Hall). It is targeted at increasing the job skill and employability of younger prisoners (18 - 24), and improving their chances in the labour market on release.

A research study is in hand to assess women's aspirations, experience and work intentions on release, and to make recommendations about strategies for increasing the employability of women.

Healthcare

Work is in progress to develop a standard for women's health care in prison. It will be promulgated in 1999. Particular attention is being given to ensuring that all maternity services are provided under a protocol agreed with the National Health Service Trusts serving the area where each prison is located. Similar partnership arrangements for cervical and breast screening are developing well. Work is in hand to review prescribing practice in women's prisons.

Self-harm by Women Prisoners

The care of prisoners who are at risk of suicide and self-harm is one of the Prison Service's most vital tasks. Suicides amongst women in prison are rare. They occur in roughly equal proportions to suicides amongst male prisoners. This differs from the community where suicides amongst men outnumber those amongst women by approximately 3: 1. Three women took their own lives in prison in 1997; there were two suicides in 1998.

Self-injury amongst women, both in prison and the community, is far more common than amongst men. The self-harm rate for women prisoners in 1997/98 was 469 per 1,000 average daily population, which was five times higher than for men. The Prison Service launched a strategy on caring for the suicidal and those at risk of self-harm in April 1994.

The strategy aims to identify and provide special care for prisoners in distress and despair. It reduces the risk of suicide and self-harm by creating a safe environment, helping prisoners to cope with custody; identifying and supporting prisoners in crisis and treating them with dignity; caring for the needs of those affected by suicide and self-harm; and stressing the responsibility of all staff in caring for those at risk of self-harm.

The Prison Service is also carrying out research into the monitoring and recording of self-harm and will later research prisoners' motivations and reasons for injuring themselves with a view to improving the management and treatment of prisoners who self-injure.

Mother and Baby Units

There are Units at four prisons (Askham Grange, Holloway, New Hall and Styal) providing a total of 64 places.

In December 1998, the Director General of the Prison Service announced a full review by the Prison Service into the principles, policies and procedures for mothers and babies/children in prison. Recent controversial cases had suggested a fundamental review was appropriate.

The review includes a re-consideration of the principles which underpin the Service's policy and provision, legal obligations and European conventions and the need to ensure consistent implementation. The priority will be to assess how, in all cases, the best interests of the child can be met. Any new arrangements will be agreed with the Department of Health.

The report, with recommendations for a future strategy, is due to be submitted to the Director General by the end of March 1999. He has informed Ministers of his intention to publish the report.

Education for Women Prisoners

A recent survey on women's prison education, conducted in September 1997, indicated that the majority of women surveyed had left school at 16 or under, had no educational qualifications and had little experience of paid employment. The majority were carers, they lacked confidence and considered vocational, rather than educational qualifications, as the best way to improve their employment prospects on release.

A Prison Service Women's Education & Training Group was established to make recommendations on developing an education curriculum which would more closely meet the needs of women prisoners.

The Education and Training Policy, approved by the Prisons Board in November 1998, has set clear targets for all prisoners which recognise the Government's drive for Lifetime Learning and which are in line with the National Training Targets. The implementation of the policy will ensure that education for women prisoners focuses on basic skills, employability and national accreditation.

A Directory of Education & Training Provision in women's prisons was produced in August 1998. This provides an up to date record of all subjects offered and ensures continuity of course provision.

Religious Faiths

Since the vote in 1993 in the General Synod of the Church of England, women have been admitted as Anglican Chaplains and are now Chaplains in every category of prison: male, female and Young Offenders Institution (YOI).

Offences against discipline

The last UK report recorded the higher level of offences amongst female than amongst male prisoners. As regards offences against discipline by female offenders, figures available have demonstrated a more volatile trend than those for male offenders. The female rate for the number of offences punished per head of average population fell from a peak of 343 offences per 100 population in 1994 to 244 in 1997. During the same period, the male rate fell from 220 to 174 per 100 population.

ARTICLE 3 :

ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

> *States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.*

ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

The Government wants to reduce incidents of discrimination, wherever they exist. Many women continue to experience discrimination in a wide range of situations and some may experience a double disadvantage, for example, those who have a disability or are a member of an ethnic minority.

European Convention on Human Rights

In November 1998 the Human Rights Act was passed by Parliament. The Act gives further effect in domestic law to the rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and provides an opportunity to argue Convention points before a court in the UK. This includes Article 14, which prohibits discrimination in the enjoyment of the Convention rights.

The Act will, with limited exceptions, make it unlawful for public authorities to act incompatibly with the Convention rights. People who believe their Convention rights have been infringed will be able to argue their case before domestic courts, and to receive an appropriate remedy where the court finds that a public authority has acted unlawfully. The Act will also require all courts and tribunals to read and give effect to domestic legislation, so far as possible, compatibly with the Convention rights. If they cannot, the High Court and above will be able to declare the legislation incompatible and signal to Parliament that the law needs changing.

The main provisions of the Act have not yet been brought into force. Before that happens, the judiciary will need to receive training so that it can handle Convention points confidently. Government Departments also need time to prepare for implementation.

RACE & DOUBLE DISADVANTAGE

During the period spring 1984 - spring 1998, the rate of employment for white females grew by 10% whereas for ethnic minority women it grew by only 4%. In 1997 the economic activity rate among women was highest among Black Caribbean women at 75%, compared with 73% for white women. In comparison, the rate of economic activity amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women was particularly low at 29%. Although Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have low official economic activity rates, these figures may well underestimate their work in family businesses and the informal economy.

Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian and Black African women are least likely to be in professional or technical jobs. Chinese women have the highest representation in these jobs. This corresponds with their position of holding the highest overall volume of qualifications. Caribbean women are the most likely group to have a higher qualification below degree level whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are much less qualified than all other women.

3.1 Highest qualification held by women of different ethnic groups aged 16-59

	None, or below GCSE	GCSE level or equivalent	A level or equivalent	Degree or above
White	38%	25%	29%	8%
Caribbean	34%	29%	34%	3%
Indian	40%	21%	19%	19%
African/Asian	32%	25%	27%	15%
Pakistani	60%	22%	11%	7%
Bangladeshi	73%	17%	7%	3%
Chinese	25%	29%	30%	17%
All ethnic minorities	41%	24%	24%	11%

Source: Modood, T. et al. (1996) Ethnic Minorities in Britain. London PSI

In 1997, across all ethnic groups women were more likely to be occupationally and industrially segregated and work in the service sector than men. Almost twice as many men (19%) worked in manufacturing as did women (11%). However, Indian and Pakistani women were nearly twice as likely as other women to work in this sector.

Black women are concentrated in particular industrial sectors, such as the hotel industry, catering, retailing and other services. Around one third worked in the health or social work industries compared with one fifth for all women. They experienced slower rates of promotion and worked longer hours. White women work on average 31 hours a week, ethnic minority women work 33 hours a week.

Occupational and industrial segregation can lead to an additional disadvantage. According to the Labour Force Survey in 1997, women had lower average hourly pay than men. Women from certain ethnic groups, namely Indian and Pakistani/Bangladeshi women, had the lowest levels of pay.

Ethnic Minority Women in the Civil Service

In 1994, as part of its wider commitment to promote equality of opportunity across the Civil Service, the Cabinet Office commissioned a study:

- to identify the perceptions ethnic minority women civil servants held about their experience of any barriers to equality of opportunity;
- to identify their career progression compared with men and white women, from available statistical data;

- to identify any barriers to equality of opportunities, taking account of perceptions, statistical and any other information available; and

- to identify practical, cost-effective solutions to address any barriers to equality.

Whilst the main focus of the study was the perceptions ethnic minority women hold about their employment experiences in the Civil Service, it also obtained the views of white women, managers with experience of multi-ethnic staff management, personnel and human resource managers and ethnic minority men.

The key findings of the *Study of Double Disadvantage: Ethnic Minority Women in the Civil Service* published in 1996, were:

Life at work: the view of most staff involved in the study was that ethnic minority women suffer from racial discrimination and sexism. The view was that they had a worse life at work than white women and ethnic minority men.

Communications and teamwork: ethnic minority women felt that they were not part of the Civil Service culture and that there were barriers to communication between them and white staff.

Job satisfaction and career aspirations: although most staff interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the current lack of prospects in the Civil Service, ethnic minority women also appeared to derive less satisfaction from the content of their work than white women and ethnic minority men. Another marked difference was that ethnic minority women appeared to feel a greater degree of frustration by their lack of progress, and the lack of recognition, than other staff interviewed.

Promotion, training and career development: although they rated themselves as fitted for promotion, ethnic minority women felt they had fewer opportunities for advancement than white women. This was not, however, because of a lack of training and self-development: many of them have had more training than their white women colleagues and they were making many efforts to widen their skills and experience.

Effectiveness of equal opportunities policies, and suggested improvements: ethnic minority women saw few concrete results emerging from the Civil Service's equal opportunities policies; in contrast white women saw these policies as one of the main advantages of working in the Civil Service.

Study recommendations

The 1996 Study made recommendations for action under five broad headings:
- opening up channels of communication with ethnic minority women
- developing potential
- management of people
- improving life at work for everyone
- improving the implementation of equal opportunities policies.

Review of progress

In April 1998, the Cabinet Office circulated to departments and agencies a *Review of Progress*. The review found that almost all departments and agencies had taken some initial action to consider the implications of the *Study of Double Disadvantage* for their organisation. The original *Study* and the *Review of Progress* underlined the need to identify and deal with concerns about unfair discrimination as part of an effective equal opportunities strategy.

The review highlighted examples of good practice and indicated areas where further action is needed. Specific actions for departments and agencies highlighted by the review included promoting clear harassment complaint procedures for staff, including those who work directly with the public, and measuring confidence in complaints procedures; ensuring effective equal opportunities awareness training and equipping managers to manage diverse teams effectively; and carrying out equality proofing and monitoring the effectiveness of personnel policies and procedures.

All Government Departments and agencies are encouraged to develop an inclusive equal opportunities strategy which addresses any disadvantage encountered by particular groups. Identifying and tackling double disadvantage is an important aspect of such a strategy. For example, the Department of Social Security (DSS) has introduced a scheme *Realising Potential* to develop ethnic minority staff.

WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

In December 1996 there were 366,332 people registered under the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, of whom 99,254 were women. This compares with April 1995 when 381,409 people were registered as disabled, of whom 280,381 were men and 101,028 were women.

The following provides information on disabled people in the labour market. (Thousands, column per cent)

3.2 Current long-term disabilities only

	Long term disabled* a) or b)	a) DDA current disability	b) Work limiting disability	Not long-term disabled
All people of working age	6,201	4,969	5,208	28,664
men 16-64 & women 16-59	18%	14%	15%	82%
% who are women**	47%	48%	46%	48%
% from ethnic minorities	6%	6%	6%	7%

Source : Labour Force Survey, Winter 1997/98. Figures for GB only.

** This category includes those with a disability which limits the kind or amount of work or has a substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities and those known to have a progressive condition. It may exclude some people with progressive conditions and severe disfigurements who feel that these do not* *limit their work or have a substantial adverse impact on their day-to-day activities.*

*** Lower numbers reflect the fact that women aged 60-64 are not included in the working-age population.*

Disability Discrimination Law in the UK

Since the last report the UK Government has enacted the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. The DDA includes a new right of non-discrimination in employment which replaced the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944, introduced a right of access to goods and services and the establishment of a new National Disability Council (covering GB and Northern Ireland). The main employment provisions and the first rights of access of the DDA were brought into force in December 1996.

Although the Act applies to both men and women, it is described in some detail here because it is expected to have a significant effect on the lives of disabled women. Under the DDA a disabled person is anyone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People who have had a disability are also covered by the employment and access provisions. Further provisions on the definition are included in the Regulations and statutory guidance is available.

From December 1996, Part II of the Act made it unlawful for an employer with 20 or more employees to discriminate against disabled people. This means that such an employer cannot treat any employee or job applicant less favourably than other people, because of a reason relating to his or her disability, unless such treatment can be justified. For those in work, the duty on employers not to discriminate against them extends to the opportunities afforded for promotion, transfers, training and other benefits.

3.3 Numbers and percentages of all working age people currently (1998) disabled in the UK

	Men	Women	TOTAL*
***Both* DDA disabled (current disability) and work-limiting disabled**	2,112,000 11%	1,896,000 11%	4,008,000 11%
DDA disabled (current disability) *only*	474,000 3%	479,000 3%	954,000 3%
Work-limiting disabled *only*	727,000 4%	551,000 3%	1,278,000 4%
TOTAL*	3,313,000 18%	2,926,000 17%	6,239,000 17%
Total DDA disabled (current disability)*	2,586,000 14%	2,376,000 14%	4,961,000 14%
Total disabled work-limiting*	2,839,000 15%	2,447,000 14%	5,286,000 15%

*Source: Labour Force Survey, Spring 1998; *N.B. Figures may not add up due to rounding.*

For all those of working age in the UK, information from the Spring 1998 Labour Force Survey is summarised in the above table. DDA disabled (current disability) includes people who have a long-term disability which substantially limits their day-to-day activities. Work-limiting disabled includes people who have a long-term disability which affects the kind or amount of work they might do.

Discrimination also occurs when an employer fails to comply with a duty to make a reasonable adjustment for the disabled person, unless that failure can be justified. An employment Code of Practice is available with practical guidance for employers.

A review of the small employer threshold exempting those with fewer than 20 employees began in December 1997. It involved a wide-ranging consultation exercise, following which the Government announced that from December 1998, the employment provisions of the DDA will apply to employers employing 15 or more people, from the previous limit of 20 or more. The Disability Rights Commission, after it has been established, will be asked to monitor progress in this area with a view to making any further recommendations. An enhanced DDA help line provides more focused information and good practice advice for small businesses and others and helps point callers in the direction of appropriate specialist advice.

The provisions outlawing discrimination by trade organisations against disabled people were introduced on 2 December 1996 (along with the other employment rights) with one exception being the duty of reasonable adjustment. This means that trade unions, employers' associations, chambers of commerce, chartered and professional institutions and bodies such as the Law Society are covered by the provisions in addition to any duties they may have as employers and service providers.

The National Disability Council (NDC), established under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, is an independent body whose statutory duties are to advise the Government on measures likely to reduce or eliminate discrimination against disabled people, and on the way in which the DDA is implemented and operates in practice. It can advise Government on its own initiative and prepares Codes of Practice on the DDA when requested to do so. The Council reports to Parliament at the end of each financial year. In November 1998 it completed a consultation exercise on a draft Code of Practice on the remaining provisions in Part III of the DDA, which comes into force in October 1999 in the case of reasonable adjustments to policies and practices and the provision of auxiliary aids; and in 2004 in the case of reasonable adjustments to premises. Responses are currently being analysed. This Code will replace one issued by the Government, based on NDC proposals, which covers the first rights of access which came into force in December 1996.

To assist the 8.5 million disabled people in Britain the Government is to establish a Disability Rights Commission (DRC) to help enforce rights for all disabled people including disabled women. The DRC will have a wide range of functions, including monitoring, and will provide a central source of advice to disabled people, business, and the public and voluntary sectors. The Disability Rights Commission Bill was introduced in December 1998 and the DRC should be established in the year 2000. After the DRC is established it is envisaged that the NDC will be abolished.

A Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF) was set up in December 1997, chaired by the Minister for Disabled People based at DfEE. Its Terms of Reference commit it to providing recommendations to Government on how to secure comprehensive civil rights for disabled people by June 1999. The DRC Bill is based on recommendations made by the Task Force in March 1998.

Membership of the Task Force was announced in December 1997. There are 24 members drawn from disability organisations, trade unions, local government and businesses, including small businesses. Twelve of the Task Force members are themselves disabled and nine are women.

Employment opportunities for disabled people in the UK

The majority of men and women with disabilities are also looking for work with assistance from mainstream jobcentre services and employment and training programmes. Individuals with disabilities have a priority for a place on these programmes. Where specialist help is needed it is provided through the Employment Services' Disability Service Teams. Within these teams Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) provide information on employment and training, Employment Assessment and appropriate Work Preparation as well as advice on the Access to Work programme which helps disabled people to overcome barriers to employment, and for people with more severe disabilities, the Supported Employment Programme. Disability Employment Advisers can also advise on the retention in employment of people in work who develop a disability or those whose existing disability is having an impact on their employment.

Disability Service Teams also promote good employment practice by promoting the Employment Service's disability symbol. The disability symbol enables employers to signal their commitment to employing people with disabilities and helps disabled people to know which organisations are committed to offering them sound employment opportunities.

New Deal for Disabled People

Under the New Deal for Disabled People £195 million has been set aside from the Windfall Tax to fund a programme improving opportunities for disabled people who want to move into or stay in work.

The New Deal for Disabled People is an integral part of the wider policy to help disabled people into work. A new Disabled Persons Tax Credit which is planned for introduction in October 1999 will replace and improve on the Disability Working Allowance. The Government is also examining the effect of benefit rules on incentives for disabled people who want to work and considering changes where they act as a barrier to work.

There are over 2 million working age people claiming incapacity benefits. 1.6 million receive the contributory Incapacity Benefit and of these a little over 31% are women.

One million of those people claiming Incapacity Benefit would like to work. The majority have not worked for around 5 years or more and half are over 50. Two thirds of people making new claims for incapacity benefits have been sick for 6 months and the remainder receive Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA).

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) has 4 elements:

- innovative projects - a key element of the New Deal involves funding a number of innovative schemes to test ways of helping people who want to work;
- personal adviser service - an initiative being piloted in 12 areas of the country and covering over a quarter of a million people on incapacity benefits. Advisers offer advice and support on an individual basis to disabled people who want to move towards work;
- research and evaluation - a programme of research and evaluation will be carried out. This will evaluate the effectiveness of the NDDP and research issues affecting the client group; and
- information campaign - an information campaign will be conducted to improve knowledge of existing help available to assist people into work and to change attitudes of employers and the public.

Action on disabled people in the Civil Service

In 1994, the Cabinet Office produced a 'Programme for Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service for Disabled People'. Following the enactment of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1996, and amendments to the Civil Service Orders in Council which allowed for special measures in recruitment, such as guaranteed interviews, the Programme for Action was revised. A practical handbook *Focus on Ability: A practical Guide to Good Practice in the Employment of Disabled People*, was issued to departments and agencies in 1996.

3.4 Disabled staff in the whole Civil Service to 1997, as a percentage

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Non-Industrial Staff	3.8%	3.9%	3.8%
Industrial Staff	3.2%	1.7%	3.0%
Total	3.7%	3.8%	3.8%

Source : Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service Data Summary 1997

3.5 Percentage of disabled staff, split by gender to 1997

	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Non-Industrial Staff	48.5%	51.5%	100%
Industrial Staff	91.4%	8.6%	100%
Total	51.0%	49.0%	100%

Source : Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service Data Summary 1997

In support of achieving equality of opportunity in the work place, a number of departments and agencies have registered with the Employment Service's Positive About Disabled People symbol. By becoming a symbol user, departments and agencies are making a public commitment to improving opportunities for disabled people, such as offering guaranteed interviews to suitably qualified candidates, consulting with employees, advising on ways of retaining people who have become disabled and developing awareness programmes for line managers.

The Civil Service also supports a number of other Employment Service initiatives which provide disabled people with employment. The Supported Employment Scheme provides work opportunities for people whose disabilities are so severe as to prevent them from performing the full range of duties in their job.

The Access to Work scheme provides help for departments and agencies to overcome work-related obstacles faced by disabled people, such as funding adaptations to equipment or premises and meeting additional costs of fares to work.

In 1997, the proportion of total staff identified with disabilities increased to 3.8% from 2.9% in 1996. Of the staff who leave the Civil Service, 3% have disabilities but resignation rates for disabled staff in the Civil Service are lower at 1%, compared with 3% for the Civil Service as a whole.

In April 1997, the Bursary Scheme for Civil Servants with Disabilities was set up as part of the Civil Service's response to recommendations made in 1995 by the Advisory Panel on Equal Opportunities in the Senior Civil Service. The Bursary Scheme offers a fund of £10,000 to support individuals on a two year programme of career training and development. Each bursary holder is also paired with a mentor from the Senior Civil Service who works with him or her on their personal and career development planning. The scheme is open to all permanent civil servants with a potential to reach a senior management position within the Civil Service and who have a disability as defined under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. 10 bursaries have been awarded since its launch in 1997, of which four were awarded to women.

'WORKABLE in the Civil Service' is a new initiative developed by the Cabinet Office in partnership with the disability organisation WORKABLE. It was launched in July 1998 and is tailored to help Civil Service departments and agents give disabled graduates and undergraduates valuable work experience by offering placements of between one and 12 months. These placements can be set up as an integral part of a degree course. At least 27 placements have been set up already with 13 of these for women. At least one participant has been offered a permanent Civil Service post.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The elimination of gender discrimination is central to the UK's policy on assistance to developing countries. This is reflected in the November 1997 White Paper on International Development which sets out this commitment, within the context of the pursuit of the elimination of world poverty, the upholding of human rights and the achievement of social justice.

The White Paper states that the Government's policy on equality between women and men *"is an integral and essential part of our approach to development"*, that it is *"..based on principles of human rights and social justice"*, and that poverty cannot be eliminated *"..until men and women have equal access to the resources and services necessary to achieve their individual potential and fulfil their obligations to household, community and, more broadly, society"*.

The new international development policy has consolidated and broadened the UK's commitment to gender equality, and reinforces an important shift in international thinking from a perspective which sees women as a target group for development assistance to one which sees them as having a full role to play on equal terms with men as key actors in the development process and the fight against poverty.

In implementing this policy, the Department for International Development (DFID) is using a "twin-track" approach: assessing and addressing inequalities between women and men, boys and girls, as an integral part of all development activities; and supporting specific and focused initiatives to enhance women's empowerment. The White Paper underlines the key role of partnerships in pursuing international development goals. DFID is working in partnership with the international community, governments in developing countries, the private sector and civil society.

The United Kingdom is mobilising support for a set of internationally agreed development targets for the 21st century. These seek to cut by half the proportion of the world's population living in poverty by 2015. It is estimated that up to 70% of the world's poor are female. Key targets include the elimination of gender discrimination in education, and major reductions in maternal mortality rates.

DFID spending across all sectors on activities which include the promotion of gender equality and the removal of discrimination has been rising sharply, a trend which is expected to continue. During 1997-98 124 new projects and programmes worth £266 million were approved with gender equality as either a principal or significant objective. This represents more than 35% of total bilateral commitments for the year, and sustains a trend which has seen commitments associated with the delivery of the gender policy increase by 50% over the past four years. DFID is currently supporting more than 300 projects and programmes world wide which in one way or another promote gender equality.

DFID is seeking to make resources and opportunities for economic and human development more readily available to women, particularly those who are poor. Key approaches include seeking to improve women's access to markets and employment opportunities, making credit more readily available to poor women, and ensuring that infrastructure improvements benefit women as well as men. The UK is also contributing to the gender aware design of economic management and sector investment programmes and the growth of a socially responsible private sector.

New work has begun on the effects on women of globalisation and the liberalisation of world trade. A programme is also being developed to support initiatives on ethical trade and socially responsible business and the promotion of core labour standards which will protect women and other workers from exploitation.

Women's disadvantages in education and health are widely documented. Almost two out of every three illiterate people in the world are women, while the world's poor women are more than 100 times more likely to die of causes related to pregnancy and childbirth than women in Europe. The UK's commitment to this work has been illustrated by the Prime Minister's pledge at the 1997 Denver Summit to double expenditure in health, education, and clean water in Africa by the year 2000.

DFID pursues its gender equality goal in all areas of its work, and examples can be found in all the sectors in which it works. Work is increasingly being focused on issues of women's empowerment, as well as seeking to reduce the considerable burden which women in developing countries carry.

More than half of the UK aid budget is spent through multilateral channels, including the European Union, the United Nations, and the international development banks.

The UK plays a full role in the work of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which is one of the main forums for donor co-ordination. DFID made a major contribution to the development of the *DAC Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* published in February 1998, and an associated DAC source book on *Concepts and Approaches Linked to Gender Equality*. DFID is also strengthening links with the Commonwealth Secretariat, which is doing innovative work in helping develop women's budgets and gender management systems to improve public services.

UK collaboration with the UN family is continuing to strengthen and expand. Examples include increasing the Government's financial support to UNIFEM during 1997 and 1998, and providing technical support to the International Labour Organisation's programme *More and Better Jobs for Women*. DFID is also helping the World Health Organisation to develop policy, guidelines, and training programmes for health workers to tackle practices prejudicial to the health of young girls, including female genital mutilation.

DFID is working closely with the World Bank, including contributing to the work of the Poverty and Social Policy Group of the Special Programme of Assistance to Africa on integrating gender equality concerns into the design of economic reform programmes. A substantial contribution has been made to the 1998 Poverty Status Report for Africa, on the theme of Gender and Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa.

ARTICLE 4 :

TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

> 1. *Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but shall in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality and treatment have been achieved.*
>
> 2. *Adoption by States Parties of special measures including those measures contained in the present Convention, aimed at protecting maternity shall not be considered discriminatory.*

Temporary measures

The "positive action" provisions of the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act permit single-sex training in order to increase representation in jobs where women are under-represented. Use of the provisions is widespread. They have enabled the providers of many education and training programmes such as Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and Local Enterprise Councils (LECs) to offer a wide range of programmes to help meet women's special needs. As in Great Britain, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order permits single sex training in certain circumstances and special initiatives have been developed to ease women back into the workforce. Further information about training is provided under Article 10. Positive action is also allowed under race relations legislation. There is a range of measures open to employers and others to help people from ethnic minorities compete for jobs on an equal footing with the rest of the workforce.

Elections

The Government is considering ways of improving the gender balance of successful candidates who are elected at European, national and local elections. New electoral systems for consideration were published recently by the Jenkins Commission, set up by the Prime Minister to look at the ways elections are run. Most attention has been on encouraging more women to put themselves forward as candidates for election, but much of this area of the process is dependent on how candidates in political parties are selected.

European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (SSPPR)

In Northern Ireland, funding under the Employment Sub-Programme of the European Union's Peace and Reconciliation Programme has been made available to promote reconciliation and to respond to the opportunities and challenges of peace. The funding is aimed at boosting growth and employment, supporting the re-direction of redundant skills, reinforcing the efforts for the long-term unemployed and providing support programmes for marginalised groups. The first EU allocation of funding was approximately £25m (£33m when matching funds are added).

There has been an important boost to childcare provision under Measures 3 and 4 of the Employment Sub-Programme of the SSPPR which relate to improving the accessibility and quality of training, education and employment services. To date 94 out-of-school schemes are being supported under this funding, offering 3,000 community based places to children of those wishing to avail themselves of training, further education or employment opportunities.

The use of targets

Because of the underlying principle that discrimination on grounds of sex is unlawful, the setting of "quotas" remains unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act. However, benchmarks which involve goal-setting instead of a pre-determined number of women in particular positions or occupations, are increasingly used in both the private and public sector and are proving effective in many cases. The essential principle remains that only the best candidate for any job should be appointed, but that access to opportunity should be improved.

Equality in Public Appointments

The Government has endorsed the aim of a 50:50 ratio of women and men in public appointments within the overriding principle that all appointments should be made on merit. Women currently hold 32% of all public appointments, compared with 30% in 1995 and 23% in 1990. Further details are provided under Article 7.

ARTICLE 5 :

STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICES

States Parties should take all appropriate measures:

a. *To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;*

b. *To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases.*

STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICES IN GENERAL

Equality of opportunity and access underpin the Government's education and training policies. Where under-achievement or under-representation of women is found in education and training, the Government is committed to making use of the full range of means at its disposal to remove any barriers to equality of opportunity and to enable women to reach their full potential.

Although they obtain more GCSEs and A Levels and better grades, girls' academic success is not generally rewarded in later life. Girls still do not secure better jobs than boys, or even equal pay with them, and they still suffer disadvantage in this and other areas of their lives. When choosing careers many stereotypes remain. At GCSE girls and boys perform equally well at science and technology but that is not reflected in the careers they subsequently follow. In engineering there are still six times as many men as women graduates and under 2% of those starting Modern Apprenticeships in plumbing and construction are women.

So far as GNVQs are concerned, the take-up of courses overall has been roughly equally divided between males and females over the five year period from 1992-93 to 1996-97. However, there are inherent gender biases in the take-up of some courses (for example, the vast majority of GNVQ engineering awards have gone to male candidates).

GNVQ choices are influenced by social and cultural expectations. The way to increase participation rates, whether for boys or for girls, is to provide good quality, broadly based courses. GNVQ courses meet these criteria. They are not gender specific, and promotional literature aimed at prospective students avoids gender bias.

Career Stereotyping

There are a number of non-legislative, Government-led initiatives which, over time, should have an impact on occupational segregation which has traditionally seen women in lower paid jobs.

- **The National Curriculum** ensures that both girls and boys study the full range of subjects and therefore have a broad base on which to make career-related choices. Women now comprise 50% of undergraduates. In time, the impact of greater numbers of more highly qualified women, with greater earnings potential, should be reflected in higher actual earnings. For further details see Article 10.

- **Initiatives to attract women into non-traditional areas**, such as those taken or supported by the Department of Trade and Industry's Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Unit will also broaden women's representation across all sectors of the labour market.

- The implementation of the **National Childcare Strategy** is a major component in the Government's wider support and encouragement for family-friendly working arrangements. There will be particular benefits for women as an increase in quality childcare provision will enable them to maintain continuity of employment. Further initiatives in this area are being developed (see Article 11 for further details).

Career services are required to ensure that careers education and guidance is impartial, avoids stereotyping and promotes equality of opportunity for all.

Career Services activities include working with schools and colleges to ensure that boys and girls are given equal access to all subjects, to encourage parents and employers to keep an open mind about non-traditional jobs, and to introduce employers to others who have been pleased with their experience of non-traditional recruitment. Careers advice and information is available to all pupils throughout their secondary schooling, with more formal guidance built into the pastoral curriculum from age 14.

From September 1998, Secondary schools in England and Wales were required to provide a programme of careers education for all young people aged 14-16. Careers education can raise the aspirations of all, but especially those with limited horizons, and enable young people to develop career management skills so that they can take advantage of the opportunities open to them.

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) published a range of occupational guidance material to help pupils choose their career by offering an insight into particular industries or areas of work. A conscious effort is made to include case studies which challenge stereotyping and encourage young women to consider non-traditional fields of education, training and employment.

Modern Apprenticeships were introduced in 1995 and are open as much to young women as men, providing an opportunity to challenge gender stereotyping at a critical time in young women's careers. Young people are given advice and guidance on the full range of opportunities, including those in non-traditional areas for their sex. In 1997-8 nearly half (47%) of all new

Modern Apprentices in England and Wales were young women, in line with female participation in work-based training for young people generally.

Young women's continued choice of traditional occupations suggests that they have misgivings about embarking on certain occupations and careers. These concerns may arise as a result of continuing pressure to conform to traditional roles. The Department for Education and Employment has therefore stressed the need for care in marketing and selection procedures and in the provision of advice by the Careers Service. The Department has also asked the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission to send their equal opportunities' checklists to each Industrial Training Organisation.

Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)

Women are still significantly under-represented in education and employment in the traditionally male areas of physical sciences, engineering and technology. A small unit within the Office of Science and Technology has specific responsibility for improving opportunities for women in SET. The unit has a wide remit and its aims include attracting more girls in to SET subjects at school; encouraging women into higher education courses; identifying ways of improving women's chances of progression up the academic career ladder and encouraging women into careers at all levels of academic ability. The Unit acts as a catalyst and focal point and aims to encourage, support and co-ordinate the activities of the many industry associations and campaigning bodies concerned with the interests of women.

The Unit has recently focused attention on raising the profile of SET in schools, particularly for girls. Following extensive research, a series of role model posters has been sent to all secondary mixed and girls' schools. The posters feature real young women who work in SET jobs, explaining how their chosen careers have expanded their horizons, both professionally and socially, and how SET can be enjoyable and rewarding.

Women in Science & Engineering in Scotland (WISE)

A *Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Committee* for Scotland was set up in 1996. With financial support from the Scottish Office and the higher education sector in Scotland, the Committee has established on the Internet an electronic database of current initiatives and events aimed at encouraging more women into engineering.

Under a WISE Vehicle Programme initiative, initially running for 3 years, a touring bus is visiting secondary schools throughout Scotland. Its aim is to show girls the positive aspects of a career in science and engineering. The mobile teaching and exhibition centre will provide practical experience of technology, reflecting Scotland's industrial base. This will allow girls to experiment with technology in a fun and stimulating environment and to develop greater confidence.

THE MEDIA

The way that different media deal with women's concerns, events involving women and stories about individual women can influence wider public attitudes towards women.

There is concern over the way women are portrayed in the media. In the long term, a significant increase in women in positions of authority in the media should help address this problem.

The role and influence of the media in the portrayal of women is widely recognised by Government, broadcasting regulators and broadcasters. However, it is a widely accepted principle that the Government does not intervene directly in programme matters either in arrangements for scheduling or in content. Neither does the Government intervene in the recruitment and promotion policies of media companies and in this respect the media are treated like other employers. Full details about the operation and regulation of the UK media have been given in previous reports and this report therefore concentrates on recent developments.

Portrayal of Women on the Screen and on Air

Under UK broadcasting arrangements, responsibility for what is broadcast on television and radio rests with the broadcasters themselves and with the broadcasting regulatory bodies, the Governors of the BBC, the Independent Television Commission (ITC), the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority (S4C) and the Radio Authority. They are independent of the Government and accountable for safeguarding the public interest in broadcasting. Legislation requires that they do all they can to secure that broadcasters do not include in programmes material offensive to public feeling. The new BBC Charter and Agreement which came into effect in 1996 place for the first time a similar duty on the BBC Governors.

The regulators issue codes of practice to broadcasters which include provisions about offensive portrayals. The ITC and Radio Authority monitor compliance with their codes, and where codes are breached they can impose a range of penalties which include substantial fines and, ultimately, the suspension or withdrawal of a licence. All broadcasters and regulators also accept complaints from viewers and listeners.

The BBC has full responsibility for all programming and scheduling matters and judgements about its programme content including the portrayal of women. New guidelines issued by the BBC to its producers in November 1996 contain specific advice on the portrayal of women and the use of non-sexist language in programmes. The Corporation's Statement of Promises to Viewers and Listeners 1998/99 includes a promise to represent all groups in society accurately and to avoid reinforcing prejudice in its programmes.

Broadcasting Standards Commission

Under the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1996, the Broadcasting Standards Council merged with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. In addition to considering complaints, the new Commission published its code of practice for broadcasters on fairness and privacy in November 1997 and its code on taste and decency in June 1998. These guidelines include sections on stereotyping and sexual humour and innuendo.

Following on from the publication in 1994 of the report *Perspectives of Women in Television* which included an analysis of women on-screen within a sample of programmes, the Commission has continued to conduct this project.

The Press

The Press Complaints Commission's Code of Practice for print media contains the requirement that the press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to a person's sex, race, colour, religion, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.

Portrayal of Women in advertising

Television advertising must comply with the ITC's Code of Advertising Standards and Practice published in the summer of 1997. The Code makes no specific reference to the portrayal of women in television advertisements, but it does state that "no advertisement may offend against good taste and decency or be offensive to public feeling and no advertisement should prejudice respect for human dignity. Particular care should be taken to avoid treatments which, through the unthinking use of stereotyped imagery, could be hurtful to certain sections of the audience".

All television advertisements are checked for compliance with the Code by the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre, before the television companies accept them for broadcast. This process significantly reduces the likelihood of television advertising appearing which causes sufficient offence to justify ITC intervention. Although traditional gender stereotypes still do appear widely, the trend in recent years has been towards greater experimentation with less stereotyped imagery and greater use of irony and tongue-in-cheek humour when stereotypes are used. The biggest source of complaints come direct from viewers (98%), with very few (1%) coming from women's organisations.

5.1 Complaints about portrayal of women in advertisements in the UK.

	1995	1996	1997
Total number of complaints	3432	5427	5337
Number related to portrayal of women	74 (2.1%)	104 (1.9%)	76 (1.4%)
Number of such complaints upheld	32 (43%)	21 (20%)	18 (23%)

Source: Independent Television Commission, Dept. of Culture, Media and Sport

Employment of women in the broadcasting media

The Government considers that one way to ensure that women are represented fairly and sympathetically is by creating a climate in which more senior posts in broadcasting are held by women. Appointments to broadcasting regulatory and complaints bodies are made on merit, using selection criteria based on job requirements and the need for every Board to draw on a range of skills and backgrounds. Within this framework, consideration is given in the appointments process to improving the representation of women and other groups on Boards. In line with the targets set for women holding public appointments discussed under Article 4, 20 out of 48 (42%) of the posts on broadcasting bodies were held by women in August 1998.

The media are subject to Equal Opportunities legislation. Additionally, the 1990 Broadcasting Act requires licences for commercial broadcasters to include conditions requiring the holder to promote equality of opportunity in employment. The Broadcasting Act 1996 also extends this requirement to licences for new digital services.

Under its equal opportunities policy, almost all BBC directorates have an equal opportunities officer. The BBC supports a number of key initiatives to implement its equal opportunities policy. These include:

- the women's development initiative in the World Service now being developed jointly with BBC Production and BBC News has run every year since 1995;
- women's Development in the East Midlands (Opportunity 2000 Finalist), which has run since 1995;
- flexible working projects;
- portrayal on air - a video was made by BBC News to promote diversity action within the Directorate, and the BBC are in the process of producing a video focusing on gender and ethnicity issues; and
- positive action in BBC Resources, involving training women to operate cameras often resulting in appointments (Opportunity 2000 Awards Finalist), and was run for one year between 1997-98.

By the end of 1997/98, the proportion of women in management had improved dramatically reaching 29% (from 19% in 1995) for senior executives, 33% (from 25% in 1995) for senior managers and 36% (from 32% in 1995) for middle management and senior professionals. The BBC is on track to achieve its target of 30% of senior executives being women by the year 2000 and 40% of senior and middle management posts. The BBC has joined the Opportunity 2000 initiative, because the BBC's aims and objectives were consistent with this initiative and it fits in with the BBC's commitment to achieve best practice and to be open and transparent about its equal opportunities commitment.

All 15 ITV companies, GMTV (the national breakfast television licensee), Channel 4 and Channel 5 have policy statements on equal opportunities and arrangements in place for monitoring the effectiveness of their policies, for example in responses to job advertisements and appointments. Initiatives include flexible working arrangements, child care provision, job sharing, targeted job advertisements, training courses for women and work experience placements. Most licencees also maintain close links with organisations such as Opportunity 2000 representing and campaigning on behalf of women. In 1997, HTV sponsored the Welsh Woman of the Year Awards. The highest proportions of women were employed by Channel 4 (58%), Channel 5(55%), GMTV(54%) and Carlton (54%). In 1997, there were for the first time more women in junior management positions than men. Carlton and Central have no women on their Boards. However Granada has four women at board level, and LWT has three.

5.2 Number of women employed at senior levels in independent television.

	1995	1996	1997
ITV			

Board Level	11	14	16
Senior Management	not available	68	83
Channel 4			
Board Level	3	2	3
Senior Management	not available	19	21
Channel 5			
Board Level	-	-	1
Senior Management	-	-	7

Source : Independent Television Commission's Annual Performance Reviews of the ITV companies

In UK commercial radio, each of the three independent national radio licensees is required under their licence to make arrangements for promoting equal opportunities. The presence of women in senior management positions at these companies tends to be concentrated in the news and sales areas. However, at board level, the presence of women drops. One in eight Virgin Radio board members is a woman and there is also only one woman on the Talk Radio board, out of a total of five.

Obscenity legislation

The Government is committed to maintaining domestic controls on obscene and pornographic material. The robustness of the legislation has ensured that controls have kept pace with advances in technology. The principal legal control is the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which makes it a criminal offence in England and Wales to publish any article which is considered to be obscene; that is, an article which in the view of a court has a tendency to deprave and corrupt those likely to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it. This offence is subject to a maximum penalty of three years in prison and an unlimited fine. For the purposes of the 1959 Act, a person publishes an article who distributes, circulates, sells, lets on hire, gives or lends it, or who offers it for sale or for letting on hire; or in the case of an article containing or embodying matter to be looked at or a record, shows, plays or projects it, or, where the matter is stored electronically, transmits that matter.

In addition to the criminal offence, the 1959 Act also provides a forfeiture procedure under which articles which are believed to be obscene and kept for publication for gain may be seized by the police under a magistrates' warrant and brought before the magistrate for forfeiture. Unlike a criminal prosecution, forfeiture proceedings do not require it to be proved beyond reasonable doubt that a published article is obscene, as the magistrates simply have to be 'satisfied' that an article is obscene.

Pornography

The Obscene Publications Act 1959 also covers all published and broadcast material and includes material published via the Internet. The UK also has separate legal controls on child pornography - the Protection of Children Act 1978 - which prohibits the production, possession and distribution of indecent pictures of children. The Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981 controls the display of indecent material exposed to view in public places.

The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 further strengthened controls on pornography by making offences under Section 2 of the Obscene Publications Act and Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 serious arrestable offences. This made available a wide range of police powers to deal with the pornographers concerned by increasing the maximum penalty for possession of indecent photographs of children to include a possible six month prison sentence. It also extended the law to cover indecent images of children produced by computer graphics, including indecent photographs of children stored on computer discs.

The Internet

The development of the Internet poses a significant challenge in this area but the UK obscenity legislation – and the law generally – applies to the Internet as it does elsewhere. Material which is illegal "off line" is illegal "on line". The legal framework therefore underpins the work of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), a self regulatory body established in September 1996 by Internet Service Providers, with the support of the Government, in response to growing concern about the availability of potentially illegal material, particularly child pornography, on the Internet. The IWF determines whether particular Internet newsgroups carry child pornography and takes steps to have access denied to those sites. The Foundation also established a "hotline" so that Internet users can report the presence of child pornography in a newsgroup. The Foundation traces the originator of the material and sends their details to the Metropolitan police if the material originates in the UK, or to the enforcement agency in the country concerned, via the National Criminal Intelligence Service, if the originator is abroad.

The Government is monitoring the success of the IWF and has announced a review of its work which is due to report in early 1999. The review will consider, amongst other things, the extension of the IWF's terms of reference to cover sites which contain potentially illegal adult pornography. Further work by IWF includes the development of a voluntary content rating system for legal material suitable for use in the UK. It is intended that this will be compatible with filtering software packages which have been developed to enable schools and parents to restrict the types of websites to which their children have access.

Film and Video Classification

Cinema films and videos are subject to review and classification by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). The Video Recordings Act 1984 gives the Board statutory powers in respect of videos which are classified more restrictively than cinema films as they are seen in the home. The Act makes it an offence to supply an unclassified video or a video in breach of its age classification. These principles were supplemented under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which requires the Board to have special regard to any harm that may be caused to potential viewers by the manner in which the video work deals with criminal behaviour, illegal drugs, violence, horror or human sexual activity. Other provisions of the Act include: increasing the maximum penalty for supplying or offering to supply an unclassified video work to two years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine; increasing the maximum penalty for supplying a video in breach of its classification certificate to six months' imprisonment and a £5,000 fine; and increasing the powers of trading standards officers to permit them to investigate the commission of video offences committed outside their local authority area.

ARTICLE 6 :

EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN

> *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women.*

Background

There is evidence of trafficking into the UK from countries such as Ghana and Nigeria, Brazil and Colombia in Latin America and from the Philippines and Thailand in South East Asia. More recently, since the break up of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a large number of Central and East European countries have become the source and/or transit countries. There is no firm information on the numbers involved but trafficking is not thought to be a large scale problem in the UK.

UK participation in international programmes

The UK is fully committed to opposing trafficking in women and its associated activities. The Government is taking steps to implement the EU Joint Action of December 1996 to combat trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children. In addition, the UK recently adopted The Hague Ministerial declaration on a European Code of Conduct to prevent and combat trafficking in women for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Among other initiatives this year, the UK took part in an EU/US information campaign to address the problem of trafficking in women from Poland and the Ukraine. The Government is also working on the problem, together with other EU Member States and countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The UK Government also supports action to combat illegal immigration including that of women for sexual purposes, in both EU and international fora and has supported information campaigns aimed at alerting women to the risks involved in such illegal immigration. The UK seeks to encourage information sharing and good practice to combat trafficking.

EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN

Tackling the problem in the UK

Within the UK there are comprehensive laws in place to deal with those who engage in activities associated with trafficking and prostitution. These laws penalise those who encourage the prostitution of others for gain and those who live off the profits of this activity and provide special protection for women and girls who may be at risk. The most serious of these offences attract severe penalties of up to life imprisonment. The courts have powers to order the confiscation of assets of those found guilty of trafficking.

The Sexual Offences Act 1956 makes it an offence to procure a woman to become a prostitute in any part of the world, and the English courts have jurisdiction to try a case if any part of the offence occurs in England and Wales. Further, it is an offence for a person to procure a girl under the age of 21 to have unlawful sexual intercourse in any part of the world with a third person. It is also an offence to detain a woman in a brothel. The maximum penalty for these offences is 2 years' imprisonment. Living on immoral earnings is an offence that carries a maximum penalty of 7 years. Those who traffic women may also be vulnerable to other charges relating to illegal immigration and forgery, as well as procuration and prostitution offences.

Training programmes for immigration officials include a number of awareness issues and officials are expected to be alert to the existence of trafficking in women. Rather than automatically granting residence permits to the victims of trafficking to enable them to testify in court, the UK's preferred approach is to consider each case on its merits balancing the need for immigration control with the importance of the witness to a successful prosecution.

Sexual Offences

6.1 Number of women proceeded against, cautioned or found guilty for offences of soliciting under the Sexual Offences Act 1959, 1994-97, England and Wales

YEAR	PROCEEDED	CAUTIONED	TOTAL FOUND GUILTY
1994	7,000	3,100	6,600
1995	5,900	3,200	5,500
1996	5,700	3,300	5,300
1997	5,800	3,400	5,500

Source: Home Office

6.2 Number of males and females found guilty of brothel-keeping and procuring offences, 1994-97, England and Wales

Offence	Gender	1994	1995	1996	1997
Brothel keeping	Males	11	4	13	10
	Females	60	26	20	16
Procuration	Males	92	70	66	60
	Females	10	11	5	9

Source: Home Office

There has been concern about the effectiveness of the kerb-crawling offence (an offence involving the soliciting of women, taking its name from the practice of motorists who drive slowly along streets to procure women for sex) introduced for England and Wales in the Sexual Offences Act 1985. However, the offence was made recordable from 1 April 1997, which means that the police are now able to take DNA samples from those charged with kerb-crawling. These samples can be added to the national DNA database, and should assist in the investigation of more serious sexual offences.

6.3 Offenders prosecuted for kerb crawling in England and Wales

YEAR	Gender	Total proceeded against	Found guilty	Cautioned
1994	Males	1112	914	345
	Females	1	-	5
1995	Males	1262	1095	42
	Females	6	5	4
1996	Males	1200	1100	112
	Females	2	4	1
1997	Males	449	811	112
	Females	3	2	1

Source: Home Office

Sex tourism

The UK Government is totally committed to cracking down on the commercial exploitation of children both in the UK and abroad. Under the terms of the Criminal Justice (Terrorism and Conspiracy) Act 1998, it is an offence for a person to conspire to commit an offence outside the United Kingdom, provided the substantive offence constitutes an offence both under the law in the UK and under the law in the country in which the act is to be committed. This enables courts in the UK to deal with conspiracies in the UK to commit sexual offences abroad. So for instance, tour operators who knowingly organise travel abroad for paedophiles for the purposes of engaging in sexual acts against children, or groups of individuals who might organise a trip for this purpose can therefore be prosecuted, with the consent of the Attorney General, for such activities. It is also an offence to incite people to commit certain sexual offences against children abroad.

Part II of the Sex Offenders Act 1997 provides courts in the United Kingdom with the jurisdiction to deal with British citizens who commit serious sexual offences abroad, including those committed against children. The legislation applies the principle of dual criminality; the jurisdiction of the courts will only be extended extra-territorially where the conduct concerned would be a criminal offence both in the UK jurisdiction and in the territory of the state where it was committed. The UK recognises that it is usually easier and more effective for abusers to be prosecuted in the country where the crime takes place. It will always press for prosecutions to be brought in the country where the offence was committed, with the possibility of extra-territorial prosecutions being held in reserve as a last resort.

The introduction of this legislation is only one part of the UK Government's comprehensive strategy to tackle sex tourism. Other measures include the sharing of intelligence and the expertise and training skills of UK's police with other governments. UK police forces have run training courses in the Philippines and Sri Lanka. At the second Asia Europe summit, which was held in London in April 1998, the UK Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Secretary of the Philippines announced a major UK-Philippines initiative on combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. A conference of experts was held in London in October 1998 to share good practice and strengthen links between states, non-governmental organisations and international organisations.

The convictions of British nationals in the Philippines for sex offences, the existence of extra-territorial legislation, and the co-operation between the UK police and police forces abroad, demonstrate that all parties are taking the problem more seriously.

Child prostitution

In December 1998 the Home Office/Department of Health issued joint draft guidance for consultation on Children involved in Prostitution. This was the first time the UK Government has issued any guidance on how to recognise the problem and how relevant agencies, especially the police and social services should deal with children and prostitution.

The draft inter-agency guidance did not decriminalise soliciting, loitering and importuning by children but emphasised that children in prostitution are primarily abused children and those adults who take advantage of them, whether by pimping them or as "punters", are child abusers. It encourages the use of the full range of criminal offences against those who corrupt or abuse children.

It is intended that the guidance should be a practical guide, the purpose of which is to enable all agencies to work together to:

- recognise the problem;
- treat the child primarily as a victim of abuse;
- safeguard children and promote their welfare; and
- work together to provide children with strategies to exit prostitution.

The draft guidance builds on ground breaking guidelines adopted by the Association of Chief Police Officers which were piloted successfully in Wolverhampton and Nottingham.

ARTICLE 7 :

WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC LIFE

> *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country, and in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right*
>
> *a.* *to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;*
>
> *b.* *to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government;*
>
> *c.* *to participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.*

Following the General Election in May 1997, the number of women elected to the House of Commons rose significantly and reached 121, 18% of the total number of Members of Parliament in November 1998. The number of women holding Cabinet posts as at November 1998, is 5 out of 22, and the total number of women in government posts in November 1998 was 22. The House of Lords, at November 1998, had a total of 103 members who were women, of which 16 were hereditary peers and 87 were life peers.

PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

In recent years, there have been a number of initiatives aimed at securing, on merit, greater representation on public bodies of women and members of the ethnic minorities. Since 1992, all departments have had individual plans with measurable goals for improving performance. The table below shows that, since then, there has been a steady increase in the number of appointments held by women.

7.1 Public appointments held by women in the UK between 1992-1997

	1992	1995	1997
All public appointments	41,011	40,170	38,083
Number of appointments held by women	10,701 (26%)	11,898 (30%)	12,010 (32%)

Source: Public Bodies 1997, Cabinet Office

The number of appointments held by members of the ethnic minorities has also increased during this period, and the position for ethnic minority women is summarised below.

7.2 Public appointments held by ethnic minority women in the UK between 1992 and 1997

	1992	1995	1997
Appointments held by member of the ethnic minorities	802 (2%)	1,184 (3%)	1,377 (4%)
Of ethnic minority appointments, number held by women	158 (20%)	349 (30%)	430 (31%)

Source : Public Bodies 1997, Cabinet Office

In order to ensure that further progress is made, the Government has launched a new initiative to encourage greater participation of under-represented groups in public life. This involves a plan of action based on the following commitments:

- equal representation of women and men in public appointments, and a pro-rata representation of members of ethnic minority groups and disabled people;
- appointment on merit, using fair selection procedures which recognise non-traditional career patterns as suitable qualifications for appointments.

All Government departments are required to produce individual plans covering a rolling three year period detailing their goals for women appointees and the steps to be taken to achieve them. The plans are updated and published each year and progress towards goals is monitored. Details of the Government's plan of action and individual departmental plans for the period 1998 - 2001 were published in a paper *Quangos: Opening Up Public Appointments*, in June 1998.

Information about public appointments, including a gender breakdown of appointments and remunerated appointments is set out in the Cabinet Office publication *Public Bodies*, which is published annually.

The figures published show that the number of appointments held by women is increasing. However women are concentrated in less prestigious, locally based appointments and women's representation at the highest levels is low.

7.3 Percentage of Remunerated Public Appointments held by Women in UK: 1997 (Chairperson)

Salary: Chairperson (Paid, Part-time and Unpaid)	**Total Appointments**	**Women's appointments**
£10,000+	195	40
£1 - £9,999	10	2
Unpaid	11	2

Source : Public Bodies 1997, Cabinet Office

7.4 Percentage of Remunerated Public Appointments held by Women in UK: 1997 (Deputy Chairperson and members)

Salary: Deputy chairperson/members (Paid, Part-time and Unpaid)	Total Appointments	Women's appointments
£10,000+	101	32
£1 -9,999	1151	431
Unpaid	285	89

Source : Public Bodies 1997, Cabinet Office

Alongside the efforts of individual Departments to increase the numbers of women, there are measures being taken across Government to support the appointment of women to public bodies.

This work is supported by the Public Appointments Unit in the Cabinet Office which will continue to monitor the progress made against the departmental plans. In addition, the Unit actively promotes equal opportunities through its various programmes of work, including close liaison with the Women's Unit, regular contact with organisations representing women, and attendance at events and seminars run by such groups. The Unit has also set up a small working group on public appointments and equal opportunities, and provides guidance to departments on all aspects of equal opportunities policy. The Unit maintains a database of details of candidates for public appointments including names of women and members of the ethnic minorities and is able to provide details of potential candidates for a wide range of appointments.

The Unit works closely with the Commissioner for Public Appointments who has a keen interest in equal opportunities issues. The Commissioner was appointed in 1995 to monitor, regulate and provide advice on departmental appointment procedures for executive NDPBs and NHS bodies. His remit was extended on 1 October 1998 to cover Ministerial appointments to nationalised industries, public corporations, utility regulators and advisory NDPBs. One of the seven principles in his Code of Practice for Public Appointments Procedures is that departments should sustain programmes to promote and deliver equal opportunities principles.

In July 1995, the former Government responded to the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life, relating to appointments to executive Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) including Health Service bodies, and which were designed to produce a more open and accountable appointments process. One of the first recommendations to be implemented was the establishment of a Commissioner for Public Appointments to oversee appointments to NDBPs and NHS bodies.

The Women's Unit is also active across Government in supporting Departments in their efforts to achieve a 50:50 ratio of women and men in public appointments, offering advice on measures to increase the numbers of women at all stages of the process.

The Women's National Commission (WNC) published *Stepping Out in Public - A Woman's Guide to Public Appointments*. Plans are in hand to update this. The guide provides information, guidance and advice to women about the opportunities available to them, together with case studies of a number of successful women appointees at different levels. The WNC is also active in circulating details of specific public appointments to women's organisations and encouraging women to apply for them.

As well as publishing *Stepping out in Public*, the WNC produces *Public appointments: A Directory for Women* - which lists public appointments by department, describes the composition of public bodies with details of when the next appointments are due, the qualifications required, the commitment involved and the remuneration if any. This publication is updated regularly.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

White Paper: Modern Local Government: in touch with the People

In July 1998, the Government published its local government White Paper, which sets out its agenda for modernising local democracy. The changes to political management structures, electoral and consultation arrangements, accountability and scrutiny of councils proposed in the paper will make local government more accessible and should, among other things, encourage more women to stand for election. In particular, the Government's proposals for new management structures will reduce the number of committee meetings each councillor has to attend, thus reducing the substantial demands on their time and enabling more women to contribute.

Background

The number of women councillors is low, estimated as around 1 in 4 councillors in Great Britain. But the proportion increased from 10% in 1964 to 27% in 1997. Furthermore, there are roughly the same number of women in leadership positions as men despite being outnumbered 3 to 1 overall.

The Government hopes to encourage more women to become councillors. The main problem in recruiting new councillors of any gender or race is the steady decline in the public's interest in local affairs and the standing of local government and politics generally. The Government is addressing this through its programme of democratic renewal. It is committed to increasing public participation in local decision taking by all sectors of the community. Drawing women more into their authorities' decisions should encourage some to become councillors in due course.

Local Councils

Recent figures show that 28% of councillors in England are women; the figure for Wales is 20%. This is despite the fact that, having decided to stand, women are just as likely as men to be elected.

A study of potential women candidates in the South West of England found the reasons that women are reluctant to stand reflect the reasons that some women are unable to fulfil their potential in paid employment:

- difficulty in juggling responsibilities in the home with those at the council;
- difficulty of fitting in with the traditionally unsocial hours involved in council work; and
- lack of confidence in their meeting skills (for those with little employment experience).

Similar concerns over traditional attitudes, social pressures and family responsibilities were also reflected in a study of Welsh female unitary authority councillors.

However, when considering what steps might be taken to increase the number of women on local councils much depends on how political parties select their candidates.

Local Government Staff

Of all staff working in local government 70% are women (District authorities tend to have a more even split than other authority types). However, only 42% of the female workforce is full time and females make up 90% of the part time workforce. Currently only 10% of all Chief Executives and of Chief Officers are female. However, this figure shows a rise from 1% (CEs) and 5%(C0s) since 1991.

Local government is involved in several equal opportunities initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for female employees. These include Opportunity 2000 and The Women's Leadership Programme run by the Local Government Management Board.

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

The Civil Service

The Civil Service is committed to equality of opportunity for all staff. The Civil Service Management Code states that there must be no unfair discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, or (in Northern Ireland) community background.

The position of women in the Civil Service has improved significantly since the introduction in 1984 of the first Programme for Action to achieve equality of opportunity for women.

Over 90% of staff work in departments and agencies which have action plans to achieve equality of opportunity for women.

The Senior Civil Service

Since the last report was published in 1995, there have been increases in the number of women occupying middle management positions, but there is more work still to do. This is particularly evident in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) where women account for only 16% of the workforce.

Encouragingly, there has in recent years been a clear upward trend in appointments of women in senior posts filled through externally advertised open competition, and in the proportion of applications from women for such appointments.

Aware of the need to continue to explore ways to improve on the current position, in the autumn of 1997 the Cabinet Office set up a working group of senior officials from across Whitehall to consider how the Service can further improve the representation of women, ethnic minority and disabled people. As part of this work, the group has considered the representation of women in the SCS. In particular, the group is considering the merits of the establishment of a bench-mark or target for the representation of women in the SCS by the year 2000 or 2005.

7.5 Women in grades (percentage), in the UK non-industrial Civil Service: 1994-97

GRADE	1994*	1997**	1998
Senior Civil Service***	12%	15%	16%
Grade 6	13%	17%	17%
Grade 7	19%	20%	24%
Senior Executive Officer (SEO)	15%	21%	20%
Higher Executive Officer (HEO)	22%	30%	30%
Executive Officer (EO)	47%	47%	48%
Administrative Officer	69%	61%	62%
Administrative Assistant	70%	66%	64%
Representation across all grades	51%	51%	51%

Source : Civil Service Data Summary 1995 & Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service Data Summary 1998, Cabinet Office

**1994 Excludes scientific and Diplomatic Services posts and Northern Ireland Civil Service*

***1997 Excludes Northern Ireland Civil Service*

****The Senior Civil Service (SCS) was introduced on 1 April 1996. It covers most staff in former grades 2- 5. The data, where SCS figures are given, are based on the SCS responsibility level, and include some staff outside the SCS but with similar responsibilities, including senior Diplomatic Service staff.*

The Fast Stream

From 1995 to 1997, the proportion of applications from women to the Fast Stream Development Programme from women has remained consistent at approximately 42%. However, the overall success rate of women in this programme has risen. Despite falling between 1995 and 1996, the proportion of women amongst successful candidates rose from 36% in 1996 to 39% in 1997.

Family Friendly Policies

The Civil Service recognises the need to support working parents as they combine work and family responsibilities. Many departments and agencies provide assistance with childcare - for example, by helping with childcare costs; providing information about private nurseries and play-schemes or giving special leave for childcare emergencies. Virtually all departments and agencies provide one or more of the following: part-time working, career breaks or job sharing. The number of staff working part-time has increased and now over 11% of all Civil Servants work part-time compared with 3% in 1984. 22% of women now work part-time.

Staff Appraisal

As part of the Service's commitment to equality of opportunity, research has been commissioned by the Cabinet Office to identify best practice in staff appraisal. This guidance will be available later in 1999. It will help departments and agencies ensure that their appraisal systems treat women in the same way as men by, for example, highlighting potential gender bias and discrimination.

Mainstreaming and Policy Appraisal

The *Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service Progress Report 1995-1997* identifies mainstreaming as a priority. It recommends to departments and agencies that they examine their policies and procedures and determine how they might best ensure that equal opportunities is integrated into both policy and practice. The Civil Service is committed to adopting the principles of mainstreaming as set out in the guidelines *Policy Appraisal for Equal Treatment*, issued by the Women's Unit jointly with the Home Office and Department for Education and Employment in November 1998.

Programme for Action to achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service

The Cabinet Office is currently working on a single overarching Programme for Action. Such a Programme will assist departments and agencies to develop a strategic approach to equal opportunities, whilst maintaining the important specific focus required on particular groups.

It will help to ensure that equality of opportunity is an issue not just for Human Resource managers but is truly integrated into everyday actions of all those who work in the Civil Service.

Trade Unions

At the end of 1996 there were 245 trade unions in Great Britain with 7.94 million members, of whom 45% were women. The number of women general secretaries, currently 33, has increased fivefold since 1993, and represents about 13% of the total. About 10% of unions have women presidents and women account for 12 out of 47 members, or 26% on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) General Council. Trade unions are increasingly aware of the need to attract more women members if they are to halt the continuing decline in their membership. This is demonstrated by the extent to which initiatives such as the TUC's New Unionism project, launched to boost membership across the movement, is targeting growth sectors of the economy - typically female, part-time and non-manual. An Organising Academy, launched in January 1998 to spearhead the initiative, is training the new organisers. It is headed by a woman director and two thirds of its 35-strong first intake are women.

WOMEN IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The UK has a very comprehensive, active and influential voluntary sector. Women make an important contribution to every aspect of the voluntary sector, whether chairing major charities and national voluntary organisations or as the driving force behind small community groups. The National Centre for Volunteering commissioned a national survey in 1997. The survey suggested that half of current volunteers are women, with a particular emphasis in the fields of health and social welfare and children's education.

The survey also showed that women are almost three times more likely than men to be involved in a voluntary activity connected with children's education or school, and were also more likely to be involved in the fields of social welfare, elderly people and religion. In contrast, men were twice as likely to be involved in voluntary work related to sports and exercise, and more likely to be active in groups connected with hobbies, recreation, the arts and politics.

Women were more likely than men to be involved in raising or handling money, and in those activities classified as direct services. Men were more likely to be involved on committees, in providing transportation services, and in representational activities.

Experience gained in managerial and decision-making positions in the voluntary sector can prove to be a valuable asset for women interested in seeking public appointments.

Women were slightly more likely than men to agree that a society with voluntary workers shows it is a caring society, while men were twice as likely to hold the view than volunteers are less efficient than paid staff. Women were more in favour of a government campaign to encourage young people to volunteer and slightly more favourably disposed to an element of compulsion in any government scheme.

WALES

Public Appointments

In Wales, new procedures for Public Appointments have been put in place. General practice is that appointments are now advertised publicly and widely, and nominations are accepted from a variety of sources such as self nominations, and from professional and representative associations. The Welsh Office is developing a programme with representative organisations to increase the pool of good candidates from a variety of backgrounds. The programme is aimed at making the public appointments process more accessible; making the criteria for appointments more explicit; making sure that independent assessors also reflect diversity; and giving applicants more feedback and constructive suggestions about routes into public life. As part of this programme, the Welsh Office recently developed and implemented a "Spreading the Word" project in conjunction with the re-configuration of NHS Trusts in Wales, using the media and contact with a range of organisations.

The Welsh Office has undertaken a number of initiatives to attract more women, including newspaper articles, radio interviews and seminars. This has met with some success. Of 84 new appointments since May 1997 for which the Secretary of

State for Wales had sole responsibility, 34 (40%) were women, which resulted in a 3% overall increase in the proportion of women in all public appointments in Wales. In addition, a recent drive by Health Authorities and NHS Trusts in Wales is aimed at encouraging more women to apply for chairs and non-executive directorships.

The Welsh Office

The Welsh Office has a comprehensive policy on equal opportunities. It includes initiatives on flexible working hours, part-time working, job sharing, nursery facilities and holiday playcare. The Department is working to mainstream its equality policy into all management practices and to support this an Equal Opportunities handbook has been issued to all staff giving guidance, information and examples of good practice.

As at 1st January 1998, 53% of Welsh Office staff were women. Since the policy was introduced in 1985, women have made gradual progress throughout the grades. Representation of women at all grades from Executive Officer to Grade 1 has increased. Women hold 23% of posts in the Senior Civil Service and 54% of posts in grades below the Senior Civil Service.

Currently, 12.5% of permanent staff work part-time and this includes staff from administrative assistants to the senior civil service. 23% of all women in the Department work part-time.

The Welsh Office has taken on a higher and more pro-active role in representing the interests of women and people from ethnic minorities, and also in taking forward policies which cover across the board human rights/equality of opportunity issues, including policy on public appointments. An Equality Network has been established and it has a key role to play in driving forward mainstreaming and in making equal opportunities considerations an automatic factor in developing and implementing policy.

Local Councils

In 1997 the University of Wales published a study of female councillors in Welsh Councils which found that they were 4 times more likely to have degrees/higher degrees than the population as a whole. The majority were over 40 and married, and only 9% were under 40. The report also found that female councillors believed that traditional attitudes on the part of local branches of political parties, the electorate, social pressures, childcare, domestic responsibilities and lack of confidence are the main reasons why there are so few women in Local Government in Wales. The Welsh Local Government White Paper notes that the Welsh Office will be considering, with the EOC, how councils can be made more attractive environments for women.

After elections are held in May 1999, Wales will have a regional tier of Government in the form of the National Assembly. This new body will assume the responsibilities currently held by the Secretary of State in addition to secondary legislative powers. Below the National Assembly, the existing single tier of 22 local authorities in Wales will remain unchanged.

7.6 Women in top management positions in Wales in April 1998

CATEGORY	PERCENTAGE
Chief Executive	10.3%

Chief Officers and Directors	10.5%
Deputy Chief Officer, Deputy Director and Head of Service	16.1%

Source: Local Government Management Board Survey, April 1998

The Welsh National Assembly

The Government of Wales Act 1998, setting up the National Assembly of Wales, contains two sections (48 and 120) dealing with equal opportunities. The first requires the Assembly to have due regard to equal opportunities in the conduct of its business, and to make appropriate arrangements to that end. The second requires the Assembly to make arrangements to exercise its functions in a way which has due regard to equality of opportunity. It also requires the Assembly to publish a report after each financial year showing how effective its arrangements have been in doing so.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Appointments

Sir Len Peach, Commissioner for Public Appointments for both GB and for NI, issued Guidance for Northern Ireland in July 1996. That Guidance has now been implemented in the new procedures developed by departments in Northern Ireland for making appointments.

The main changes involved are:

- the use of advertising for major appointments;
- the development of a 'job specification' and 'person specification' for each appointment;
- the development of selection "Panels" to consider the candidates for each appointment;
- the requirement that at least one third of the membership of each Panel should be independent;
- the requirement for candidates for public appointments to provide information about their public activity; and
- the monitoring of the community background, ethnic origin, geographical location, disability and gender of applicants and appointees as a means of determining whether public bodies are fully representative of the NI community.

These changes have been applied to the majority of appointments in Northern Ireland, including those outside the Commissioner's remit, as a means of ensuring best practice.

The Commissioner's Guidelines emphasise that departments in Northern Ireland must also ensure that their procedures encompass the principles of equality of opportunity. Departments are asked to have regular contact with the public and with representative organisations, including women's groups and organisations, to identify barriers and ways of overcoming them.

Initiatives to increase the Proportion of Women on Public Bodies in Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Office plans and goals for 1997-2000 covering gender include a target of 40% female membership of public bodies by the year 2000. Currently, the figure stands at 35%. Departmental Plans are monitored on a regular basis to assess progress towards that target.

In January 1998 the Secretary of State published a report on public appointments in NI. This report set out for the first time information on the membership of public bodies in NI and on appointments made during 1996/97. The report also highlighted a need to tackle areas of under-representation on public bodies. A further volume of the report was published in March 1998, listing those individuals who held public appointments in NI at 31 March 1997. Copies of both volumes of the report are available on the Internet.

The Central Community Relations Unit in Northern Ireland funded a research study on public appointments in NI. The project was undertaken by the University of Ulster between March 1996 and March 1998. It considered the issue of diversity in public appointments, with particular reference to age, gender, class, religion and geographical location. The Central Appointments Unit of the Central Secretariat is considering the recommendations from the report. It is the intention to draw on the research to increase the number of women held on the Central database and to further improve appointment procedures to ensure that women are aware of and apply for public appointment vacancies.

An internal review group has also been addressing the problem of under-representation on public bodies of a range of groups: women, young people, disabled people and those from ethnic minorities. The review's conclusions are expected to include recommendations on target setting, scrutiny of 'job' and 'person' specifications, and improving information about appointment opportunities.

The percentage of women currently serving on public bodies in Northern Ireland (see table below) is almost 35%; this compares with 23% in 1991. The percentage has risen steadily, if not dramatically, in recent years. Of the 163 publicly appointed bodies in Northern Ireland, 77 Chair and 10 Deputy Chair posts are held by women.

7.7 Percentage of Public Appointments held by women in NI: 1995 - 1998

	Total appointments at 31 March	Number held by women	% held by women
1995	2258	718	32
1996	2263	747	33
1997	*2946	1027	35
1998	*2833	986	35

Source: Northern Ireland Central Appointments Unit.
**These figures include 4 Health Tribunals not included in 1995/96 figures*

Local Councils

There are currently 84 female Councillors in the 26 Northern Ireland local Councils. This represents an overall percentage of 14%, an increase of 2% since 1994. Of the 26 District Councils, 4 have a 14% of Councillors in Local Government Districts in Northern Ireland are women. Four have a woman as Mayor/Chair and a further 7 have a woman as Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chair.

The Civil Service in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland at 31 January 1998, women represented over 53% of all non-industrial staff in the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS). In 1998, in the more senior Civil Service grades, women held 25% of Deputy Principal posts and 15% of Grade 7 posts. This compares with 24% and 13% respectively in 1993. In February 1993, the NICS announced a goal of 10% female representation at Grade 5 and above for the General Service Group by the end of December 1998. At 1 January 1998 female representation at this level was 9% compared with 6% in 1993.

The Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) is considering a new set of goals and timetables for those General Service administrative grades where females are under-represented. The Department is taking this work forward in consultation with the trade union side and the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland EOC (NI).

The Northern Ireland Office has established a range of initiatives to promote gender equality. These include policies on family leave; family friendly working patterns; childcare; guidance and training on harassment; and positive action advertising. These mirror closely the initiatives in the Home Civil Service.

The Northern Ireland Assembly

In Northern Ireland, following elections on 25 June 1998, a new shadow Assembly was established to prepare for the transfer of powers early in 1999. The Northern Ireland Agreement envisages that the Assembly will take full executive and legislative responsibility for all the matters currently dealt with by the Northern Ireland Departments which are currently responsible to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and that it could, in future, take over responsibility for other matters currently dealt with by the Northern Ireland Office itself.

The New Assembly is intended to reflect and embody a new determination among the people of Northern Ireland to work together to deal with the business of government in a way which commands cross community support with local decisions, taken by local people, being more likely to take full account of all concerns.

14 women were elected as members of the new Northern Ireland Assembly, a total of 13%.

SCOTLAND

Public Appointments

The Scottish Office (SO) is taking positive steps to encourage more women to come forward. In September 1997, 47% of appointments made by the Secretary of State for Scotland were held by women with 24% of bodies chaired by women, an increase from September 1996 when the equivalent figures were 44% and 20% respectively. New targets published in June 1998 aim for 50% of appointments by the Secretary of State for Scotland to be women, and 35% of bodies to be chaired by women.

In May 1998 the Secretary of State for Scotland launched a press and radio advertising campaign under the title "Changing Scotland" to encourage more ordinary people to become involved in public life. A number of these advertisements were aimed particularly at women. The campaign is underpinned by an information leaflet and a booklet which gives information about public bodies and details of available appointments. The campaign was successful with 7,000 initial enquiries and some 5,000 copies of the booklet issued.

The next stage invited recipients to note interest in specific appointments. Early indications are that, of those who expressed an interest in specific appointments, around a quarter were women. This is not as many as might have been hoped, but enabled some good candidates to be invited to apply for appointments who might not otherwise have been considered.

The Civil Service in Scotland

In Scotland at 1 April 1998, women represented over 45% of all non-industrial staff in the Scottish Office. In 1998, in the senior civil service grades, women held 23 (1%) of the posts. 130 (5%) of posts in band C (Principal/Grade 7 level) were held by women.

SO has a well established equal opportunities policy which supports a number of working practices to encourage gender equality. These include policies on family friendly working patterns; childcare provisions; paid and unpaid leave available for domestic purposes; and measures to deal with harassment and bullying in the workplace.

SO is currently reviewing how equality issues, including women's issues, should be taken forward.

The Scottish Parliament

In a referendum in September 1997 the people of Scotland voted for a Scottish Parliament. The first elections will be held in May 1999.

The Government is committed to promoting equal representation of men and women in the Scottish Parliament. The White Paper *Scotland's Parliament* made it clear that the Government attaches great importance to equal opportunities for all, including women, and urged all political parties offering candidates for election to have operated this in their internal candidate selection processes.

The new Parliament will be housed in new purpose-built accommodation and the design will ensure that all facilities required for equality of access will be included. Childcare provision will be available to members of the Parliament and staff.

An all-party Consultative Steering Group (CSG) has been set up to take forward consideration of how the Parliament might operate. One of the main concerns of the Group is to ensure that the Parliament is as accessible and inclusive as possible. Ideas include the adoption of normal business hours and the recognition of Scottish school holidays.

The CSG issued a consultation paper in April 1998 entitled *Your Views on How the Scottish Parliament Should Work*. The paper was issued to over 800 organisations and made available on the Internet. It invited comment on four key principles; on sharing power; on accountability; on making the Parliament accessible; and on providing equal opportunity. Over 350 responses were received and have been analysed. The final report to the Secretary of State with the CSG's recommendations was published in January 1999.

Local Councils

There are presently 276 (22.2%) women councillors in Scotland, out of a total of 1245. The Commission of Local Government and Scottish Parliament is looking, amongst other things, at the recruitment of candidates for council membership. The Commission is expected to report to the Scottish First Minister soon after the inauguration of the Scottish Parliament.

Local government staff in Scotland

In Scotland there is one female Chief Executive, representing 3% of the total number of Chief Executives in Scottish local authorities.

As at December 1997, the proportion of women employed by Scottish Councils was:

- 63% of local authority employees;
- 47% of local authority full-time employees;
- 92% of local authority part-time employees;
- 56% of all full-time administrative and professional local authority employees;
- 92% of all part-time administrative and professional local authority employees;
- 17% of all full-time manual and other local authority employees; and
- 92% of all part-time manual and other local authority employees.

ARTICLE 8

WOMEN AS INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

> *States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organisations.*

The Diplomatic Service

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), which provides the staff to British Diplomatic Missions overseas, has an objective to ensure that staff are free from direct or indirect discrimination and to promote a culture of equal opportunities for all staff. The department is currently reviewing existing equal opportunities policies and re-examining the position of women in the FCO. As part of this process, they will be proposing options for increasing the numbers of women reaching the Senior Management Structure (SMS) in the short term; a programme of action to improve the prospects for women in the medium term; and steps to tackle internal cultural barriers to women.

The FCO already has in place a series of policies aimed at improving the position of women within the organisation. They include:

- equal opportunities;
- promotion of flexible working;
- facilitation of joint postings;
- a robust harassment policy;
- career breaks of up to five years;
- the option to remain at home for ten years to meet domestic commitments; and
- childcare support.

Improved career break schemes, paid maternity leave and flexible working practices should improve the numbers of women who remain in the FCO and compete for jobs at high levels. Changes to the scheme are planned, to try to ensure that women are not disadvantaged as a result of taking a career break.

The FCO is piloting Assessment and Development Centres for progression into the SMS. Experience in other organisations suggests that this kind of assessment for promotion provides equality of opportunity irrespective of gender.

In the year ending 31 March 1998, 48 women (44% of all entrants) entered the Diplomatic Service (DS Grades 1-9) via the normal entry routes. At the end of 1998 there were 719 women (32% of the Diplomatic Service total) working overseas; 6 women (4% of the total) were working overseas as Ambassadors or Heads of Mission; and 6 women (8% of the total) were Heads of Departments in the United Kingdom.

8.1 Women in Management Grades in the Diplomatic Service in March 1998

GRADE	Home Civil Service Equivalent	Number of Women	Women / Total %
Snr. Management (1 - 4)	Grades 1 to 5	23	6
5 Senior	Grade 6	9.5	17
5	Grade 7	80	18
6	Senior Executive Officer	24	10
7 Mainstream	Higher Executive Officer	128	27
7 Development (+8)	Higher Executive Officer (D)	50	34
9	Executive Officer	338	43
TOTAL		652.5	26

Source : Human Resources Statistics and Planning Section, Personnel Command-Personnel Policy, FCO.

Women's Role In Defence

Women currently represent almost 8% of the total strength of the Armed Forces. The proportion of women varies with each Service but as at 1 April 1998, women in the Naval Service represented 7% of the strength, in the Army 7% and in the Royal Air Force (RAF) 9%. The highest ranks currently held by women are Captain in the Naval Service, Brigadier in the Army and Air Commodore in the RAF. Women serve in a wide range of posts including fast jet pilots, Principal Warfare Officers and Commanders of major University Royal Navy Units. Women are deployed in all operational theatres, e.g. they are serving among other duties, as interpreters, drivers, in signal teams and on explosive device disposal with the UK forces in Bosnia, and over 700 women are serving at sea in around 50 ships.

Roles for Service women are continually being opened. One of the most significant developments this decade was the decision to allow women to serve at sea. More recently the Secretary of State for Defence announced in October 1997 the increase in the number of posts open to women in the Army from 1 April 1998 from 47% to 70%. This was supported by the introduction of gender-free physical selection tests; Physical Selection Standards (Recruits) (PSS(R)). The tests will be used as a basis for counselling all recruits on career opportunities for which they are physically qualified, as the standard of potential physical capability required will vary with employment trade groups.

A further review was announced during a Defence Debate in July 1997 which looked at remaining areas of employment closed to women in all three Services. The review's conclusion was published in the Strategic Defence Review in July 1998, and announced that 1300 "attached billets" in the Royal Marines are to be opened to women and will be filled by Royal Navy and Army personnel. The remaining exclusions (Infantry and Armoured Corps posts, Royal Marine Commandos and the RAF Regiment which are closed on combat effectiveness grounds) will be kept under review as the Army assesses, over two to three years, the impact of its "70%" policy.

8.2 Number of women serving in the UK Armed Forces as at 1 April 1998

SERVICE	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	TOTAL
NAVAL SERVICE	453 (5.8%)	2,809 (7.7%)	3,262 (7.3%)
ARMY	1,172 (8.4%)	6,260 (6.5%)	7,432 (6.8%)
ROYAL AIR FORCE	939 (8.6%)	4,067 (9.1%)	5,006 (9%)
COMBINED	2,564 (7.9%)	13,136 (7.4%)	15,700 (7.5%)

Source: Defence Analytical Services Agency, Ministry of Defence

8.3 Number of women serving in the UK Armed Forces as at 1 April 1995

SERVICE	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	TOTAL
NAVAL SERVICE	473 (5.4%)	3,437 (8.2%)	3,910 (7.7%)
ARMY	1,105 (7.9%)	5,472 (6.2%)	6,577 (6%)
ROYAL AIR FORCE	1,011(7.9%)	5,110 (9.7%)	6,121 (9.3%)
COMBINED	2,589 (7.3%)	14,019 (7.1%)	16,608 (7.1%)

Source: Defence Analytical Services Agency, Ministry of Defence

8.4 Female strength of UK Regular Armed Forces (including trainees)

YEAR	OFFICERS	OTHER RANKS	TOTAL
APRIL 1995	2,589 (7.3%)	14,019 (7.1%)	16,608 (7.1%)
APRIL 1996	2,478 (7.3%)	13,204 (7%)	15, 682 (7.1%)
APRIL 1997	2,380 (7.3%)	12,451 (7%)	14,831 (7%)
APRIL 1998	2,564 (7.9%)	13,136 (7.4%)	15,700 (7.5%)

Source: Defence Analytical Services Agency, Ministry of Defence

Separate studies are looking at service in submarines and as mine clearance divers where women may not serve at present, due to medical and practical reasons. The recommendations are currently with the Minister for the Armed Forces.

ARTICLE 9

NATIONALITY

1. *States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband.*

2. *States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.*

The UK nationality legislation reflects the principle that men and women have equal rights in this area and there have been no changes since the last report.

Immigration Rules concerning Marriage

The United Kingdom Immigration Rules [HC 395 paras 277-295 (1/10/94) as amended by HC 26 (5/6/97)] permit spouses to enter or remain in the United Kingdom for twelve months in the first instance, subject to meeting strict criteria. The twelve month rule is applied in precisely the same way to both men and women and is considered an essential safeguard against abuse by those who are prepared to use marriage as a means to obtain settlement in the United Kingdom to which they would not otherwise be entitled.

Those permitted to remain for twelve months are protected by UK law as it relates to, for example, domestic violence. Current immigration policy regarding spouses who suffer domestic violence is that where a marriage breaks down during the probationary period, for whatever reasons, the normal expectation will be for the spouse to return to their home country. This is because the fundamental reason for the person's admission in the first place - to continue or commence a stable family life - no longer exists. The Government is currently considering the option of a introducing a concession which would give victims of domestic violence settled status in this country even though they are no longer living with their sponsor, if they can provide objective evidence, such as a relevant court order, conviction or police caution; however, the precise criteria for the concession have still to be determined. This is set out in the White Paper *Fairer, Faster and Firmer - A Modern Approach to Immigration and Asylum* .

In line with its manifesto commitment to have an "*immigration and asylum system which is fairer, faster and firmer*" the Government abolished the "primary purpose rule" on 5 June 1997. This requirement of the Immigration Rules relating to marriage required an applicant to prove that the primary purpose of their marriage was not to obtain admission to the United Kingdom. The rule was widely considered to be arbitrary, ineffective and unfair in that it caught not only totally bogus marriages but also genuine marriages where the parties intended to live together permanently even if it was entered into primarily with the aim of the applicant coming to the UK.

Overseas Domestic Workers

The UK Government has been concerned for some time at reports of abuse of domestic workers accompanying their employers to the United Kingdom. The majority of domestic workers are women. The Government worked with Kalayaan, the organisation which represents overseas domestic workers, to see what changes could be made to the conditions under which they are admitted with a view to improving their conditions and preventing abuse.

Following this review, only those domestic workers whose duties exceed those set down in the International Labour Organisation's International Standard Classification of Occupations are allowed to accompany their employer to the United Kingdom. This means that those whose duties are only cleaning, washing and cooking will not qualify. Once in the United Kingdom, they are allowed to change domestic employment to another employer, provided the nature of their duties meets the above criteria.

These changes, to be included in the Immigration Rules at a suitable opportunity, will reduce the number of overseas domestic workers admitted to the United Kingdom.

The Government is also willing to regularise the stay of those overseas domestic workers, who, having suffered abuse, left their original employer and now find themselves in an irregular position through no fault of their own.

Refugees

Under the terms of the "Social Security (Persons from Abroad) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1996", asylum seekers, whether male or female, who apply for asylum on arrival at a UK port are entitled to receive benefits until a decision is taken on their application. However, applicants who make their applications after entry into the UK are not usually entitled to benefits. The Government is reviewing the present arrangements concerning the entitlement of asylum seekers to benefits, as it is quite unacceptable that any asylum seeker should be left destitute, and will make any necessary changes in due course.

Both male and female asylum applicants may take up employment if their claim has not been resolved within six months of the date of application or if they have been refused asylum and have lodged an appeal.

Women granted asylum in the United Kingdom have the same rights as United Kingdom residents and are entitled to work and undertake training. Ethnic minority women have the same entitlement to statutory services as their counterparts.

The Government recognises, however, that refugees have more difficulty than the indigenous population in accessing services. It therefore provides funding to refugee voluntary organisations who advise and assist individual refugee communities to set up self-help projects. The voluntary organisations are aware that refugee women, often owing to cultural differences and domestic pressures, have fewer opportunities to work or study than men. To combat this, the voluntary organisations are promoting the creation of women's groups to provide mutual support for refugee women. Despite the difficulties, a sizeable proportion of women are active participants in refugee voluntary organisations and community groups.

Women refugees in general are beneficiaries of the support given by these organisations.

The Refugee Council, the main umbrella NGO representing the interests of refugees, provides both direct and indirect services. These include the provision of advice and assistance to individuals and refugee community organisations covering a range of issues such as employment training, education, social care and health care. The Council also works to improve access to, and the quality of, statutory services; to assist in the development of community groups; to provide organisational support and services to women refugees; and to encourage the development of women's networks.

Regional Refugee Councils, and other support groups, operate in various parts of the country. These organisations provide advice and support services, at a local and regional level, on a wide range of issues affecting refugees. Refugee women are playing major roles in this work which, in turn, has provided opportunities for self-development.

Refugee Action runs a community development programme for refugees outside London, and also provides various advice services for refugees and displaced people in the UK. In these services, women's development has very high priority. In 1996, Refugee Action facilitated the formation of the Refugee Women's Legal Group. This is a group of lawyers who are establishing and promoting good practice in representing and determining asylum claims made by women. During 1998, Refugee Action has also helped to promote a linked body, Action for Refugee Women, to ensure participation by refugee women themselves in influencing policy and practice in this area.

ARTICLE 10

EDUCATION

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

a. *The same conditions for career and vocational guidance for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories. In rural as well as in urban areas, this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;*

b. *Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;*

c. *The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods;*

d. *The same opportunities to benefit from scholarships and other study grants;*

e. *The same opportunities for access to programmes of continuing education, including adult and functional literacy programmes, particularly those aimed at reducing, at the earliest possible time, any gap in education existing between men and women;*

f. *The reduction of female student drop-out rates and the organisation of programmes for girls and women who have left school prematurely;*

g. *The same opportunities to participate actively in sports and physical education;*

h. *Access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.*

THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

Education opens the door to opportunity for all children, boys and girls alike. Where there is inequality and under-achievement, the Government is determined to root it out and raise standards in all schools and colleges to those of the very best.

The Government has pledged to put £19 billion into education over the next three years. This is money for modernisation to drive standards up to the level of the best in all schools.

The key targets to be achieved by 2002 are:

- class sizes for 5 and 7 year olds to be cut to 30 or under;
- 80 per cent of 11 year olds to reach the required standards of literacy;
- 75 per cent of 11 year olds to reach the required standards in mathematics;
- every school, college, university and library, and as many community centres as possible to be connected to the National Grid for learning;
- students in further and higher education to be increased by 500,000;
- truancy and school exclusions to be cut by one third by 2001-2002; and
- in Scotland, to give all children in the pre-school year, access to a quality part-time education place by the winter of 1998 and to extend this commitment to three year olds in the year before their pre-school year by 2002.

In the UK responsibility for the provision of education is devolved to local education authorities and schools, colleges, and universities. All are bound by the requirements of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to ensure equality of opportunity for both sexes. Guidance is provided nationally for governing bodies on these requirements and is reviewed regularly.

Arrangements in Northern Ireland are broadly parallel to those in England and Wales. The provision of education in Scotland is governed by different legislation from that in England and Wales. (for further details see later in this section).

SURE START

Sure Start is a new Government programme which is specifically targeted at families with children under age four. Sure Start will work with parents to help them to ensure that their children are healthy, confident and developing their full potential.

The Government has set aside £452 million over the next three years to provide for 250 Sure Start projects in England. These projects will build on best practice and will encompass the factors which research, both in this country and overseas, has proved work best for young children and their families.

The programme builds on existing services for local families which are likely to include:

- advice and support to parents including mother and baby/toddler groups and information on local services;
- play facilities and early education provision which has scope to involve parents;
- primary health care services beyond the standard services such as ante and post-natal care, development checks and immunisations;
- good quality childcare provision e.g. crèche facilities for parents participating in Sure Start activities; and
- outreach workers to provide support in the home for parents who may have restricted mobility or who lack confidence to seek support outside the home.

Careful consideration will be given when deciding the location of Sure Start projects, but in general, they will be established in the areas of greatest need, in order to provide support to those who need it most. The Government will use a range of indicators of local need, including indicators of child health and development and educational achievement. Within these areas all families with children under four will be eligible to attend, but better off families will pay a charge for services which are not already provided free.

The Sure Start programme is expected to be helping 100,000 0 - 3 year olds and their families as it builds up to full strength by the end of this Parliament. The number of children covered by an individual project will vary, but on average will cover a similar area to a primary school, offering services to between 100 and 250, under three year olds and their families.

Guidance issued at the end of 1998 sets out which areas are eligible to apply for Sure Start funding. This enables first round bidders to draw up their proposals during the spring of 1999 and announcements of the areas participating by May 1999.

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

From September 1998, every four year old in England whose parents want one has had access to a free, good quality part-time pre-school education place in an institution in the state, private or voluntary sector. The Government has made a commitment to expand the number of three year olds receiving free pre-school education from 34% in January 1997 to 66% in January 2002. An additional £390 million has been allocated to early education over the period 1999-2002 to fund this expansion. This brings the total budget for pre-school provision for this period to £829 million in addition to the funding local authorities receive for this purpose through the normal channels. Local authorities, working with local Early Years Development Partnerships, have responsibility for planning, co-ordinating and delivering places in their area.

5 - 16 : BOYS & GIRLS IN SCHOOL

Compulsory education for girls and boys begins at around age 5 and ends at the end of the school year in which a pupil becomes 16 years of age.

Curriculum and Assessment

The National Curriculum and associated assessment arrangements make up one of the main ways in which the Government raises standards in schools. The National

Curriculum also promotes equal access for boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 16 to a broad and balanced curriculum which promotes their spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development and prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Introduced in 1989, the National Curriculum consists of eleven subjects. All 5-14 year olds must be taught English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, history, geography, music, art and physical education. In addition, all 11-14 year olds must also be taught a modern foreign language. For 14-16 year olds, the number of National Curriculum subjects taught is reduced to English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, PE and a modern foreign language.

From September 1998, for a period of two years leading up to a new National Curriculum being introduced in 2000, the curriculum for 5-11 year olds will be made more flexible to enable schools to concentrate on the teaching of literacy, numeracy and associated targets. The arrangements for English, mathematics, science and information technology will remain the same. Primary schools will still have to offer a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the other National Curriculum subjects of design and technology, history, geography, music, art and physical education, but they will have greater flexibility to decide what is taught in those subjects and, where necessary, to adjust the balance of the curriculum to meet the needs of their pupils. Primary schools will still have a duty to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development. In exercising their flexibility under the new arrangements, primary schools should ensure that they continue to offer both boys and girls equal access to a curriculum which suits their particular needs, abilities and circumstances.

Also, from September 1998, the National Curriculum arrangements for schools teaching 14-16 year olds have been made more flexible to allow them to offer enhanced work-related learning to both boys and girls. Under these measures, schools who produce workable plans and ensure pupils' entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum are able to set aside up to two National Curriculum subjects from science, design and technology or a modern foreign language.

National Curriculum Assessment Arrangements

Each summer teachers administer National Curriculum tests and make a professional judgement of pupil attainment which takes into account a pupil's performance across the whole programme of study in each assessed subject. All children aged 7, 11 and 14 take nationally set tests in English and mathematics, and 11 and 14 year olds take tests in science as well. The information provided by the tests, and through the formation of a judgement of attainment, helps teachers to plan future learning and identify strengths and weaknesses of individual pupils. The results also help the Government and others monitor standards of pupil attainment. Evidence from the Office of Standards in Education (OFSTED) shows that assessment policy and practice are raising standards of attainment.

The Department is continuing to monitor schools' success in offering the full National Curriculum to girls through the annual OFSTED reports, and the results of assessment tests, to identify any gender discrepancies. The results in 1997 of pupils at Key Stages 1,2 and 3 in England showed continued improvement at each age.

Education for Family Life

The personal and social development of pupils in schools is high on the education agenda. The Government announced the setting up of the Advisory Group on Personal, Social and Health Education in May 1998. The Group has been asked to "*Provide advice on the aims and purposes of personal, social and health education; clarify and define its terms, to develop a national framework for PSHE in schools, and consider its relationship to other curriculum areas, particularly citizenship and democracy.*" The Group is expected to publish its initial advice in Spring 1999 on a national framework to feed into the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's review of the National Curriculum. It is co-chaired by two Ministers and supported by an Expert Panel comprising people with experience in a wide range of specialist areas. For sex and relationship education see Article 12.

Sport in Schools

The Government is committed to providing physical education and sport for all school pupils regardless of their ability, gender, religion or cultural ethnic background. Physical education, which includes sport, games and other physical activities, is one of ten foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and is compulsory for all pupils aged 5-16. Head-teachers have a legal duty to ensure that the requirements of the National Curriculum for PE are taught to all pupils, regardless of gender. In schools, teachers delivering the PE curriculum should use their professional judgement to ensure that all pupils are taught at a level appropriate to their age, gender, ability, size and physical development. The programme of study for pupils at each key stage should provide a PE curriculum of comparable quality for boys and girls.

The English Sports Council (ESC), established in September 1996, aims to involve more people in sport; to ensure more places to play sport; and more medals through higher standards of performance in sport. The Council encourages participation of girls in sport through the National Junior Sport Programme (NJSP), which aims to get all children involved in sport, to retain their interest and realise their full potential. All elements of the programme stress the importance of equality. The importance of enhancing the skills of coaches, administrators and volunteers is vital to developing sport and the Running Sport programme of education and training has sports equity as one of its most important components. The ESC is also currently piloting an initiative in Bristol, 'Girl Sport', which is aimed at encouraging and promoting teenage girls into sport. The ESC hope to extend the pilot nation-wide from next spring.

Retention of Pupils

An issue of some concern is teenage pregnancy and schooling. Government guidance published in 1994 makes it clear that the proper place for a pupil under 16 who is pregnant is normally in school, unless there is a medical reason to the contrary. The Department revised and consulted on replacement guidance in the autumn of 1998 which will reinforce this message in the light of the *Truancy and School Exclusion* report by the Social Exclusion Unit. The Guidance also stated that pregnancy should never be a reason for exclusion from school. It will have statutory force. Around 20% of permanent exclusions are exclusions of girls (1996/97 figures). The Government is committed to reducing the overall level of exclusion by one third by the year 2002.

GCSE, GCE and equivalent examination achievements

The proportion of both girls and boys leaving school without a General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) or equivalent qualifications has declined steadily over the last 20 years, with the rate for girls consistently below that of boys. In Great Britain in 1975/76, some 18% of girls and 20% of boys left school without a qualification, but in the UK in 1995/96 for girls and boys respectively only 6% and 9% of pupils in their last year of compulsory education had no graded results.

At GCSE level, that is at ages 15/16, there has been a marked improvement in achievement generally and girls have consistently outperformed boys in the attainment of higher grades. In the UK in 1985 59% of girls gained at least one GCSE (grades A-C) or Scottish Certificate of Education Standard Grades (1-3) while in 1996, 77% of girls in their last year of compulsory schooling gained 1 or more grades A*-C or equivalent.

Girls' attainment at GCE Advanced A level and equivalent (that is at age 18) also compares well with boys' in general. Until the early 1980s a higher proportion of boys than girls used to leave school with one or more A levels, but since then girls have out performed boys. In particular girls are achieving slightly higher level passes in mathematics, physics, chemistry and craft, design and technology - although the number of girls taking these subjects is lower than the number of boys. In Great Britain in 1995/96, for example, some 57,200 boys took A level mathematics with nearly 83% achieving pass grades A-E, while 34,200 girls sat this subject with a success rate of 87%. In A level mathematics boys out-numbered girls in the ratio 5:3 while in physics and craft, design and technology the ratios were around 3:1 and 4:1 respectively. Substantially more girls than boys took A levels English, Biology and French in 1995/96.

10.1 Examination achievements of pupils in their last year of compulsory education in the UK*, 1994/95 and 1995/96

	GIRLS		BOYS	
Percentage with:	**1994/95***	**1995/96**	**1994/95***	**1995/96**
5 or more grades A-C	48.8	50.5	39.6	40.6
1-4 grades A-G	26.8	26.4	25.0	25.5
Grades D-G only	17.5	16.9	26.2	25.3
No graded results	6.8	6.2	9.2	8.6
Total pupils (=100%) (thousands)	331.4	353.7	348.2	369.0
Pupils/students in education*** achieving 2 or more A levels/3 or more SCH Highers (percentages)	32.2	32.8	26.6	26.8

Source: Department for Education and Employment

* *Great Britain for 1994/95.*

** *No grades above D and at least one in the D-G range*

*** *Pupils in schools and students in further education institutions aged 17-19 at the end of the academic year in England, Wales and Northern Ireland as a percentage of the 18 year old population. Pupils in Scotland generally sit Highers one year earlier and the figures tend to relate to the results of pupils in pupils in Years S5/S6 as a percentage of 17 year old population.*

HIGHER EDUCATION

Participation

In the last 30 years the United Kingdom has witnessed a massive expansion in the numbers of those participating in higher education. This process began in the late 1960s but the most rapid expansion has occurred since the late 1980s. In 1989 one in six young people entered higher education and this has now risen to one in three. In 1996/97 more than 1.9 million students were studying within the higher education system, of whom 1.2 million were studying full time.

Over this period there has been a significant change in the gender balance of those undertaking higher education. In 1970/71 there were twice as many men as women in higher education. Since then women's participation has increased steadily and by 1992/93 women made up 50% of enrolled students in higher education. This increased to 52% in 1996/97 which is in line with demographic representation.

10.2 HE Students by mode and gender (all levels, rounded to nearest thousand and by percent) between 1970/71 and 1996/97

	Full-time		Part-time		Total	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1970/71	274	182	142	23	416	205
	(60%)	(40%)	(86%)	(14%)	(67%)	(33%)
1980/81	318	217	207	85	524	303
	(59%)	(41%)	(71%)	(29%)	(63%)	(37%)
1990/91	394	352	242	184	637	536
	(53%)	(47%)	(57%)	(43%)	(54%)	(46%)
1992/93	497	461	274	297	770	758
	(52%)	(48%)	(48%)	(52%)	(50%)	(50%)
1996/97	586	608	325	372	912	980
	(49%)	(51%)	(47%)	(53%)	(48%)	(52%)

Source: Education Statistics for the UK and Education and Training Statistics for the UK 1997, DfEE

An increasing emphasis on more flexible learning systems by both further education colleges and universities including access courses, modularization, credit accumulation and transfer schemes, part-time studies and summer teaching are particularly beneficial for women returning to the labour market. Growth in "access" courses, which offer flexible learning programmes with fewer formal entry requirements has been a particularly important factor in the increased participation in higher education. Numbers of such courses have increased from around 130 in 1984 to approximately 1500 for 1998/99. Some are designed specifically to help women gain entry to courses in technology and science, information technology and financial management, telematics and telecommunications as well as other subjects in which they have in the past been under-represented. Women account for around 60% of participants on Access to Higher Education courses.

There remain subject areas where women are under-represented, notably in certain sciences and engineering, though within the sciences women outnumber men in biological sciences, veterinary science, agriculture and related subjects. The Development Unit for Women, part of the Office of Science and Technology in the

Department of Trade and Industry, is supporting a number of projects to promote the study of mathematics, science and technology by women.

10.3 Women as a proportion of all enrolments in full and part-time higher education courses in the UK: 1992/93 and 1996/97 (in thousands and per cent)

Subject group	1992/93	1996/97
Medicine	15.4 (49%)	20.5 (51%)
Allied Medicine	122.4 (83%)	113 (82%)
Science	71.1 (36%)	105.7 (39%)
Engineering and Technology	29.3 (13%)	31 (16%)
Social Studies	77.8 (54%)	108.2 (58%)
Business Studies	129.2 (49%)	132.2 (50%)
Music	97.7 (60%)	146.2 (61%)
Education	86.3 (73%)	99.4 (71%)
Other Subjects	128.6 (53%)	223.3 (53%)

Source: Education Statistics for the UK 1994 and Education and Training Statistics for the UK 1997, DfEE

Higher Education Qualifications

In 1980/81 nearly twice as many men as women gained a higher education qualification. However, by 1990/91 women accounted for 45% of all qualifiers and this rose to 51% in 1995/96. Since the last report, among undergraduate qualifiers the proportion of women increased from 46% in 1991/92 to 52% in 1995/96. The situation as regards postgraduate qualifications has also improved with the proportion of female postgraduate qualifiers rising from 43% in 1991/92 to 49% in 1995/96. In subject categories the greatest differences in numbers of student qualifiers, were in the following subjects: Engineering and Technology; Computer Science; Architecture, Building and Planning (where men outnumbered women graduates); Education; and Subjects Allied to Medicine and Languages (where women graduates outnumbered men).

10.4 Numbers of men and women gaining higher education qualifications in UK undergraduate and postgraduate courses. (in thousands)

Year	Women	Men	% Women
1980/81	78	144	35%
1985/86	103	158	39%
190/91	152	185	45%
1991/92	172	204	46%
1995/96	229	217	51%

Source: Education and Training Statistics for the UK 1997

An analysis of the quality of the qualifications obtained reveals that women achieved a higher proportion of good degrees (defined as upper seconds and first class degrees) than men and a lower proportion of thirds and passes. However, women receive a smaller proportion of first class degrees than men. Figures for 1996/97 are given below, but this has been the trend for some time. These results hold within individual subjects and so do not depend on the smaller proportion of women in physical science and mathematics where firsts are more plentiful. There is no agreement as to why this occurs but it is clear that any difference in women's achievements in the UK degree system applies only to first class degrees and not to good degrees more generally.

10.5 Examination Results of students obtaining first degree qualifications by gender and mode of study 1996/97 (in thousands)

	MEN			WOMEN		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1st	9.0	0.7	9.7	7.9	0.7	8.6
Upper 2nd	43.1	2.9	46	56.5	3.9	60.4
Lower 2nd	42.1	2.9	45.0	43.6	3.2	46.8
Undivided 2nd	0.1	-	0.1	0.1	-	0.1
3rd	8.1	0.6	8.7	4.7	0.5	5.2
Pass	10.2	4.7	15.0	8.1	5.4	13.5
Total	112.6	11.8	124.4	121.0	13.7	134.6
% of 1st and Upper 2nd	46	31	45	53	33	51

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, DfEE

STATUS OF WOMEN TEACHERS

In September 1994 the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) was established to bring together for England functions for initial training (ITT), in-service training (INSET) teacher supply and the promotion of teaching as a career. The Agency is specifically charged with ensuring equal opportunities for access to the teaching profession and to encourage institutions to provide this in their admission arrangements for students who have the qualities to become effective teachers, irrespective of age, sex, race, experience or background.

Women are well represented in, and continue to be attracted to, teaching. In 1997, 90% of teachers in maintained schools in England were women.

10.6 Grade of teachers in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary sector, 1995, 1996 and 1997 - Actual numbers

		Head	Deputy Head	Classroom	Total
1995	**Male**	13,400	10,800	106,100	130,300
	Female	12,000	15,100	272,700	299,800
	Total	25,400	25,900	378,800	430,100
1996	**Male**	13,100	10,100	105,000	128,200
	Female	12,300	14,800	273,500	300,600
	Total	25,400	24,900	378,500	428,800
1997	**Male**	12,100	9,000	100,000	121,100
	Female	12,100	13,800	262,800	288,700
	Total	24,200	22,800	362,800	409,800

Source : DfEE

The proportion of women undertaking the National Professional Qualification for Head-ship (NPQH) is an improvement on the proportion of women currently in head-ship. In the latest recruitment round, 58% of candidates were women.

Promotions of Teachers

10.7 New entrants to the maintained nursery/primary and secondary sector, 1996/97. England and Wales.

	Gender	Teachers in Post	Percentage Distribution
Nursery/ Primary	Male	1,400	13
	Female	9,500	87
	Total	10,900	100
Secondary	Male	4,100	38
	Female	6,800	62
	Total	10,900	100
Total figures	Male	5,500	25
	Female	16,300	75
	Total	21,800	100

Source: Database of Teacher Records.
Notes: 1. 1996/97 data are still provisional.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Responsibility for securing further education for adults is shared between the Further Education Funding Councils, covered in the earlier section on Further and Higher Education, and local education authorities (LEAs). Broadly the FEFC is responsible for courses which lead to nationally accredited qualifications. The LEAs are responsible for securing adequate provision of all other kinds of education to meet local needs. This includes vocational, social, physical and recreational education. LEAs have a power, but not a duty, to fund courses that lead towards examinations and some do so. Figures for November 1997 suggest that women accounted for nearly three quarters of the 1.06 million enrolments on courses provided by local education authorities, either in their own institutions or contracted out to other providers of education, including further education colleges.

Baroness Kennedy's report to the Further Education Funding Council *Learning Works - Widening Participation in Further Education* was published in July 1997. The Government endorsed its recommendations to try to draw back into learning those who have traditionally not taken advantage of educational opportunity, in particular those with no or few qualifications. This includes women in low income groups and lone parents.

Literacy and Numeracy

Results from the Adult Literacy in Britain survey, published in 1997, concluded that more than one in five of the adult population has real difficulty with everyday tasks involving reading, writing, spelling and numerical skills. These people are not "illiterate" in the conventional sense. They can read and write, but not at a level necessary to play a full role in the modern world. There is little difference between the sexes in literacy rates, though a significantly higher proportion of women performed at the lowest level in numeracy, 29% of women compared with 18% of men.

The UK Government funds basic education in literacy and numeracy for all adults who need such provision. The Government also supports a Family Literacy programme, an innovative approach to the problem of poor basic skills among parents and their children. Parents and their children learn literacy skills together and separately in small, intensive courses run in co-operation with local schools. It is designed to help parents improve their own literacy and at the same time support the development of their children's skills. The majority of parents receiving support under the programme are mothers. This is largely because the programme is aimed at parents who are able to attend their children's school during the day. In 1998-99 around 120 LEAs have been offered a share of £4m funding to reach around 6000 parents and their children. From next year the Government will offer a share of £5 million to all 150 Local Education Authorities. This will ensure Family Literacy provision is available nationally. It will also offer £1million to support the development of Family Literacy.

SCOTLAND

The provision of education in Scotland is governed by different legislation from that in England and Wales. The school curriculum is not statutorily prescribed but the Secretary of State for Scotland issues guidance to education authorities, based mainly on advice from HM Inspectorate of Schools and the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum.

While girls' and young women's performance and participation in education has significantly improved in the last two decades, there remain a number of gender differentials in education and training. A recent review of research on gender and education and training in Scotland *EOC Research Findings Gender and Differentials Achievement in Education and Training: A Research Review* resulted in the following conclusions :

- at the age of 14, pupils in Scotland choose Standards grade subjects from eight curricular modes. Gender stereotyping of choice remains, and is likely to be greater for working class than for middle class pupils;

- although the average examination performance of boys and girls has increased at Standard grade, girls have progressed more rapidly than boys. Girls are less likely than boys to leave school with no educational qualification;

- traditionally girls have done well in English and they continue to achieve better results than boys in this subject at Standard grade. Despite a steady increase in the numbers of boys taking French and German, girls' performance improved over boys in Modern Foreign Languages during the 1990's. Similar numbers of boys and girls take mathematics and achieve comparable results;

- the Standard grade examination enables performance in different elements of a subject to be analysed. Girls tend to do well on internally assessed elements, whereas boys' grades are more variable than girls', for example, in problem solving in Science; and

- the number of school exclusions appears to be very low in Scotland compared with England and Wales. However, this is partly due to the way in which 'exclusion' is defined and the data is collected in Scotland. Gender disaggregated data on the number of exclusions has not been collected, but under new procedures being introduced from this school session, these figures will be collected.

In Scotland, the gap between the proportion of girls and boys with 3 or more Higher passes is widening. In 1996/97 34% of girls left school with 3 or more passes compared with 27% of boys. The corresponding figures for 1986/87 were 23% for girls and 20% for boys. More girls stay on at school longer than boys. Of all school leavers in 1996/97, 48% of girls had stayed on to sixth year compared with 41% of boys.

Setting Targets - Raising Standards

The Government wishes to encourage and stimulate all schools in Scotland to achieve excellence by enabling them to focus on standards and improvement. From 1998-99, all schools will set targets in the four key areas of literacy, numeracy, examinations and attendance. Schools are being invited to set their own targets within a consistent national framework. Targets should be stretching and take account of the levels of performance achieved by schools of similar characteristics but they should be realistic.

In Scotland, the Government is investing £56million over 5 years in early intervention to ensure that girls and boys in areas of social disadvantage have the right start in primary school and quickly attain the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy which are essential if they are to take maximum advantage of their educational opportunities.

Status of Women Teachers

In 1997, 72% of teachers in publicly funded schools in Scotland were women,

- 99% in nursery schools;
- 91% in primary schools;
- 52% in secondary schools; and
- 84% in special schools.

In Primary schools, 75% of Head-teachers were women and 89% of Assistant Head-teachers. In Secondary schools, 10% of Head-teachers were women and 18% of Assistant Head-teachers.

The Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH), which is currently being developed on behalf of The Scottish Office by two part-time Development Officers (both women), will provide important opportunities for women, and will do much to help advance the promotion of women teachers. The SQH is a supportive, work-based learning programme and, as such, it will give women the confidence to apply for Head-teacher posts by proving to themselves that they have the ability to carry out a Head-teacher's job. It will also allow them to demonstrate to selection boards that they are ready for promotion. The SQH will be launched in February 1999 with the first participants embarking on the full programme in August 1999.

Higher Education

In 1996/97 in higher education in Scotland 46% of postgraduate students were female, and in higher education institutions, 8% of professors, 16% of senior lecturers and 35% of lecturers were women.

Overall, a greater percentage of girls than boys leave school with at least one Higher grade. Until the mid 1980s, similar percentages of girls and boys left school with five or more Highers but by the mid 1990s, a five per cent gap had emerged in favour of girls. This is a considerable improvement in girls' performance relative to that of boys. Overall, however, there is little difference in the average scores of young women and men who take and achieve examinations at Higher grade, unlike the more apparent differences at Standard grade.

The Scottish School Leavers Survey (SSLS) illustrates interesting differences between young women and men and the type of training scheme or job which they enter. Gender stereotyping is clearly apparent. Figures from 1995 indicated that one in three women were in clerical and secretarial jobs/training schemes whereas more than two out of five men were in craft related jobs/training schemes.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Access to Education

Compulsory education for girls and boys begins at around the age of 4 in Northern Ireland and the Government has initiated a programme of expansion of pre-school education. In 1998/99, pre-school places in schools and other funded centres are being provided for 57% of children in the year before they begin compulsory education. There is little difference in the number of boys and girls receiving pre-school education.

All nursery schools and the majority of primary schools in Northern Ireland are co-educational. However, 17% of secondary level pupils attend single sex boys' schools, whilst 20% attend single sex girls' schools.

In Northern Ireland, a statutory curriculum introduced in 1990 offers equal access to a broad and balanced education for all pupils, both boys and girls, throughout their school careers. It is made up of religious education and six areas of study, i.e. English, mathematics, science and technology, the environment and society, creative and expressive studies and language studies (the last applies to secondary schools and Irish medium schools only). Within these areas of study, certain subjects are compulsory - all pupils must study at least one subject from each of them up to age 16. Assessment arrangements for schools in Northern Ireland broadly parallel those in England and Wales.

School Leavers' Examination Achievements

In Northern Ireland the proportion of boys and girls leaving school without any GCSEs or equivalent qualifications has declined steadily over the last 10 years, with the rate for girls consistently below that for boys. In Northern Ireland in

1987/88, 16% of girls and 27% of boys left school without any GCSEs, but by 1996/97, the comparable figures had been reduced to 5% and 8% respectively.

At GCSE level there has been a marked improvement in achievement generally and girls consistently outperform boys in the attainment of higher grades. Between 1987/88 and 1996/97 the proportion of girls gaining at least one GCSE at grades A* - C has risen from 67% to 83%, while the comparable figures for boys were 53% and 73% respectively.

At the higher level of GCSE attainment (5+ GCSE's A*- C), a similar pattern emerges. Girls continue to outperform boys but the difference is more marked. In 1987/88, 41% of girls attained this higher level ; this figure increased to 61% in 1996/97. The related figures for boys were 33% and 48%. Thus, although both girls and boys have improved, girls are further ahead of boys.

When attainment in Northern Ireland at A level and equivalent is examined, girls still outperform boys. In 1987/88, 29% of girls left school with at least one A level or equivalent whereas 23% of boys left school with the same qualification. By 1996/97, the proportion of girls leaving with this qualification had risen by 11% to 40% while boys had risen by 6% to 29%.

Further and Higher Education

In Northern Ireland Higher Education enrolments increased by over 20% between 1994/95 and 1997/98. Among full time enrolments, male numbers increased by 4% between 1994/95 and 1996/97. The number of women enrolling on full time Higher Education courses has increased by 20% over the same period. Part time enrolments have grown recently partly due to mainstreaming of continuing education courses. The number of women enrolled on part time courses has increased by 70% since 1994/95 compared with a 19% growth in male part time numbers. Women now account for over 56% of all NI Higher Education student enrolments, 57% of undergraduate enrolments and 52% of postgraduate enrolments.

The majority of Northern Ireland domiciled students gaining Higher Education qualifications in 1996/97 were female. The proportions of male and female first degree graduates attaining first class honours were broadly similar (6%). A larger proportion of NI women first degree graduates achieved upper second class honours degrees (47%) than their male counterparts (37%) and a smaller proportion achieved third class honours degrees (3% of women compared with 6% of men).

Status of Women Teachers

Women in Northern Ireland are well represented in, and continue to be attracted to, teaching. In 1998, 71% of schoolteachers in Northern Ireland were women - 88% in nursery and primary schools, 60% in secondary schools and 56% in grammar schools. Women account for almost 80% of new entrants to courses of initial teacher training leading to qualified teacher status.

In Northern Ireland between 1995 and 1998, the proportion of principal posts held by women increased from 41% to 43%. Conversely, the proportion of vice principal posts held by women fell from 62% to 58% over the same period. In 1998 women held 47% of principal posts and 69% of vice principal posts in nursery and primary schools compared with 45% of principal posts and 81% of vice principal posts in 1995. In secondary schools, women held 22% of principal posts compared with 19% in 1995 and 39% of vice principal posts compared with 36% in 1995. There has been a decline in the proportion of women holding principal posts in grammar schools from 29% in 1995 to 27% in 1998.

WALES

The White Paper *Building Excellent Schools Together* published in July 1997, is the first written specifically for Wales modern times. It reflects the distinctive nature of the education system in Wales and the commitment to implement policy in a way that recognises Wales' particular circumstances.

The White Paper made it clear that raising standards of literacy and numeracy within the context of a broad and balanced curriculum would be at the heart of the Government's programme for raising levels of educational achievement. The Government believes that the stretching targets for raising standards in Wales will only be achieved if there is concerted action at all levels to raise standards of literacy and numeracy.

Comparisons of achievement between girls and boys

In 1997, the percentage of boys achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A to C was 39% compared with 49% of girls. In English, 41% of boys achieved GCSE grades A to C with 59% of girls achieving the same grades. In Mathematics and Science, the margin was less pronounced with 40% of boys achieving grades A to C in mathematics compared with 43% of girls and in Science, for the same grades the figures are 43% for boys and 46% for girls. 31% of boys achieved the Core Subject Indicator (grades A to C in each of English or Welsh (first language), mathematics and science combination) and 37% of girls achieved this indicator.

Further Education

In Wales for the first time, the number of students on further education programmes has exceeded 200,000. In the academic year 1996/97 there were nearly 45,000 full-time or sandwich students and nearly 158,000 studying on a part-time basis (58% were women). Student numbers have increased by 60% since 1992/93 (women by 75%). Full-time students were up by 25%, but part-time distance learners showed considerably higher growth, of nearly 80% over the same period. The majority of full time students (69%) are 18 or under (28% are female). But this age group represents a relatively small proportion of the entire FE population - reflecting the preponderance of adult part-timers and women in particular. Nearly 2 in every 5 FE students are women aged 25 or more. The participation of young people in FE has remained broadly constant in recent years. In 1996/97, 27% of all 16 to 18 year olds in Wales were in full-time education in FE institutions, with the participation rate of young women in FE, as in the schools and higher education sectors, remaining higher than that of young men.

Higher Education

In Wales, higher education enrolments increased by over 21% between 1994/95 and 1996/97. Male numbers rose by 15% over this period, whilst the number of women enrolling increased by 28%. Part-time student numbers increased by 71% between 1994/95 and 1996/97.

In 1994/95 male students slightly outnumbered females, but by 1996/97 women accounted for slightly over half (52%) of all higher education student enrolments in Wales. There are, however, considerable differences in participation levels between men and women in some subject areas. For example, while more men than women study education, languages and subjects allied to medicine, female participation in physical sciences, computer science and engineering and technology is lower than their male counterparts. In 1996/97 in engineering and technology particularly, women were out-numbered 10:1.

ARTICLE 11

EMPLOYMENT, HEALTH & SAFETY AND SOCIAL WELFARE

1. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular :*

   a. *The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;*

   b. *The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;*

   c. *The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;*

   d. *The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work.*

   e. *The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;*

   f. *The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.*

2. *In order to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:*

   a. *To prohibit, subject to the imposition of sanctions, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy or of maternity leave and discrimination in dismissals on the basis of marital status;*

   b. *To introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits without loss of former employment, seniority or social allowances;*

   c. *To encourage the provision of the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in* *particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of childcare facilities;*

d. *To provide special protection to women during pregnancy in types of work proved to be harmful to them.*

EMPLOYMENT

Women's Participation in the Labour Market

The Government's agenda is work for those who can, welfare for those who can't. Women make a crucial contribution to the economy, both in their role as workers and carers. The Government is committed to encouraging family-friendly employment policies, to fairness at work policies and to improved childcare packages to encourage those parents who wish to work to do so.

The proportion of women in the labour force has been increasing and this trend is likely to continue. In 1971 women made up 38% of the labour force compared with 44% in 1996.

Over 12 million women aged 16 and over are economically active in Great Britain. This represents just over half of all women. Forty percent of women of working age have dependent children and their overall activity rate is 65% compared with 76% for women without children under aged 16. Economic activity rates are lower for younger mothers with children aged 0-4 and highest for older mothers with children aged 11-15.

Between 1985/87 and 1996 the employment rate for white women in Great Britain has increased by 6% compared with an increase of 2% for ethnic minority women in the same period. Ethnic minority women are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts; the unemployment rate for ethnic minority women aged 16 and over in Great Britain is 18% compared with 8% for white women.

Since 1990, the number of people in full time jobs in the United Kingdom has fallen and there has been a significant rise in the number of people employed part-time, but unlike the rise in part-time jobs in the 1980s, these jobs have been taken up nearly equally by men (418,000) and women (430,000). By Spring 1998, 45% of women and 9% of men in employment worked part-time. Women in employment therefore tend to work fewer hours than men, on average 31 hours per week compared with 44 hours for men. In the Spring 1998 Labour Force Survey, approximately 1.5 million people entered the workforce in the year to April 1998. Of those, 62% were female and 38% were male.

In response to a question in the Labour Force Survey (LFS), in Spring 1998 only 9% of women working part-time said they were unable to find a full-time job. Married women with young children were especially likely to work part-time by choice; just over 95% for those with children aged under 5. Just over 90% of married women who worked part-time, did so because they did not want a full-time job. Figures from the Labour Force Survey for Autumn 1997 included a question asking those who worked part-time by choice why this was so. The figures show that of those women who answered the question, just over one third said they did not want a full time job because they wanted to spend more time with their family, and a further 31% gave "domestic commitments" as their reason.

Family-Friendly Employment Policies

In recognition of the importance of and growth in women's participation in the labour market and the benefits, for parents, their children and business, of helping employees combine work and family life satisfactorily, the Government is committed to promoting a family-friendly culture in the workplace, underpinned by minimum standards in legislation. The Government set out plans for providing a package of family-friendly policies in its White Paper *Fairness at Work* which was published in May 1998.

In addition to implementing the Working Time and Young Workers Directives, the Government proposes to introduce parental leave as part of a cohesive package of parental rights which will include simplifying and improving statutory maternity rights. The Government has also welcomed the Part-time Work Directive which was extended by the UK in April 1998.

Implementation of the Working Time Directive provides rights to minimum daily and weekly rest periods; rest breaks; annual paid holidays; a limit of 48 hours a week on the average time which employees can be required to work (except by voluntary agreement); and restrictions on hours worked at night. Implementing regulations came into force in October 1998.

Implementation of the Part-time Work Directive will remove discrimination against part-time workers and increase access to part-time work. It will be implemented by April 2000, following consultation.

The Government's proposals for a cohesive package of parental rights are expected to come into force by December 1999. The package covers new rights to parental leave and time off for urgent family reasons, and simpler maternity leave rights. Employees will be protected from dismissal or other detrimental action if they exercise any of their rights in the package. The main elements are:

- **Parental leave:** three months' unpaid parental leave will be introduced for parents when they have a baby or adopt a child. Parental leave will be available to employees who have completed one year's service. Following consultation, the Government is considering views on how and when parental leave should be made available in practice and how difficulties for small firms could be alleviated. Special consideration is also being given to making the scheme work for adoptive parents whose needs may be different.

- **Maternity leave** for all women, regardless of their length of service, will be standardised at 18 weeks, in line with maternity pay. A further important change proposed will give women the right to a longer period of maternity leave, up to 40 weeks in total, after one year's service, instead of after two years which was previously the case. These changes will give over 100,000 women improved statutory entitlements. The proposed package also provides that the contract of employment will continue throughout maternity (and parental) leave.

- **Time off for urgent family reasons** will be introduced, for all employees, regardless of length of service. The right to time off will help employees with caring responsibilities, for example to look after a sick child or deal with a crisis at home.

Taken together, these provisions will provide a new baseline which will open up opportunities for employees to spend more time with their children or with the people they care for. The Government will also be taking forward an awareness and promotional campaign to encourage employers to introduce family-friendly policies which build on these minimum requirements.

Maternity rights

Maternity rights in the UK were extended in 1994, as described in the 1995 report. Research* published in 1997 showed that a greater proportion of women returned to work after having a baby than was the case in 1988, continuing an earlier trend. The proportion returning to work in 1996 within 11 months of giving birth was 67%, compared with 45% in 1988.

New Deal for Lone Parents

Lone parents are a group whose exclusion from the labour market is a primary cause of their families' relative poverty. Over 90% of lone parents are women. Lone mothers in the UK have a low employment rate: only 44% of lone mothers work, compared with 68% of mothers in couples. Low employment rates for lone parents are also marked among those with children of school age: only 55% of lone mothers with children over 5 work, compared with 76% of mothers in couples.

The Government intends to help lone parents who wish to work, and improve their incomes by helping them into work. As part of the Government's welfare to work programme, the New Deal for Lone Parents was launched in July 1997. It is initially available in eight areas around the UK, and was extended nation-wide from April 1998 to lone parents making a new or repeat claim to Income Support. It has been available to all lone parents on Income Support since October 1998. Over 90% of those benefiting from the programme are women.

The New Deal for Lone Parents is a radical new approach, giving lone parents viable choices and work opportunities for the first time. The programme's objectives are:

- to help and encourage lone parents on Income Support to improve their prospects and living standards by taking up and increasing the amount of paid work; and
- to improve the job readiness of lone parents on Income Support so as to increase their employment opportunities.

The New Deal for Lone Parents is a voluntary programme, actively marketed among lone parents whose youngest child is of school age. Although only lone parents with school age children will be contacted and invited to take part, the service is also available to those lone parents with pre-school children who wish to participate. The programme offers active case management through dedicated personal advisers. The Personal Adviser will offer advice on jobsearch, childcare, training and in-work benefits and provide an in-work support service to help them make the transition into employment. At the interview, the Adviser will discuss with the lone parent her plans for returning to work. An individual Action Plan will be drawn up, setting out all the activities the lone parent agrees to undertake, such as developing job search skills, updating work skills, increasing self-confidence and sorting out in-work benefit entitlement.

Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents is being conducted by independent researchers. A full evaluation report will be available in Autumn 1999. Interim findings were published in May 1998. The researchers measured the impact of the New Deal for lone parents by comparing lone parents' movements off Income Support in the eight prototype areas with those in matched control areas.

The research showed that the New Deal for Lone Parents, after eight months, appeared to be having a measurable effect on the numbers of lone parents on Income Support. There was a reduction of between 1 and 2 percentage points on the whole lone parent population on Income Support in the prototype areas compared with control areas. DSS analysis shows that lone parents who had gone into work following participation in New Deal for Lone Parents were on average around £39 a week better off, and have reduced their dependency on benefit by £42 a week. Overall, more than a quarter of participating lone parents have moved into work.

Childcare

The amount of day care available to pre-school children in England has continued to expand from 429,900 places in 1993 to 559,000 places in 1997. This is due partly to changing employment patterns amongst women but also to the introduction of state funding for nursery education for four year olds nationally from April 1997 (see Access to Education section in Article 10). The proportion of mothers in paid employment outside the home has grown from 52% to 62% in the last decade. Most significantly, the number of working mothers with children aged under five has increased from 32% to 51% over the same period. The Government plans to double, to 66%, 3 year olds able to access a free nursery education place by April 2002. This will have the effect of further integrating early education and day care services and will provide even more parents, particularly women, with the opportunity to work should they wish to do so.

11.1 Day Care Services for children under 8 years : Numbers of a) Premises & Individuals and b) Places in England between 1994 and 1997

YEAR	Day Nurseries	Registered Childminders	Registered Playgroups (Sessional services)	Out of School Clubs	Holiday Play-schemes
a) Centres/ individuals					
1994	5,000	96,000	17,300	990	2,700
1997	6,100	98,500	15,800	2,600	5,300
b) Places					
1994	147,600	357,000	411,300	30,000	102,000
1997	193,800	365,000	383,700	78,700	209,000

Source: Department of Health

The last four years have been a period of consolidation for the Children Act 1989 introduced in 1991 to regulate day care services. The Government is currently consulting on this legislation in the light of inconsistencies brought to light by the introduction of the nursery education grant and the expansion of services as described above. Providers of early education and day care are currently subject to different regulatory regimes - the consultation invites views on how to develop a more consistent approach across these services in the state maintained, private and voluntary sectors.

The government continues to provide a programme of grant aid to the voluntary sector who supply a significant number of day care places. In some cases these settings are preferred by parents because of their less formal environment. The continued support of a *variety* of settings remains an important cornerstone of childcare policy, thereby enabling parental choice.

A pilot programme of 'Early Excellence Centres' was introduced by the Department for Education and Employment in 1997. These centres provide models of good practice for the provision of integrated services for young children and their families.

National Childcare Strategy

The UK Government is committed to giving families genuine choices: to look after their children full time or to combine work, education or training with parenting in a balanced way. The Government is implementing a National Childcare Strategy to ensure good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 - 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements. The Strategy is founded on a commitment to promoting the well being of children, offering equal opportunities for parents, especially women, and to supporting parents in balancing work and family life.

The framework and consultation Green Paper *Meeting the Childcare Challenge* (May 1998) set out proposals to raise quality, make childcare more affordable and make childcare more accessible. This is to be achieved by working in partnership at a local level with local authorities, private and voluntary childcare providers, parents, Training and Enterprise Councils, and employers. The aim of the package is:

- **Raising the quality of care** - plans include the better integration of early education and childcare and at least 25 new Early Excellence Centres will provide models of good quality integrated education and childcare; better support for parents and informal carers; a more consistent regulatory regime covering education and childcare; establishing high quality programmes of regular out of school learning activities; a new training and qualifications framework for childcare workers; and more opportunities to train as childcare workers.

- **Making childcare more affordable** - a new childcare tax credit will be introduced for working families - part of the new Working Families Tax Credit which replaces Family Credit in 1999. It will give generous help with childcare costs of up to £70 a week for a family with one child and up to £105 a week for a family with two or more children. More help for childcare costs will also be given to parents in education and training.

- **Making childcare more accessible** - by increasing places and improving information the UK Government is encouraging a diversity of childcare provision to meet parents' preferences. Funding of some £470 million in England will be used to set up new out-of-school childcare places over the next five years. In addition from January 1999 every four year old has the chance of a free education place. Plans also include a new national childcare helpline in 1999 which will link parents with local childcare information services which meet national standards and devoting resources to local information projects which will also be internet accessible. Together these initiatives will make it easier for women to find the childcare that suits them and their families.

Out of School Childcare

Between 1993 and June 1998 the UK Government's Out of School Childcare Initiative (OSCI) has created over 81,000 good quality, affordable out of school childcare places in England. The Initiative offers parents, especially women, the opportunity to participate more fully in the labour market. Before the Initiative there were only 500 after school childcare schemes. Now there are over 3,500 schemes, most of which would not have opened without Government support. The Initiative is delivered locally by Training and Enterprise Councils in England in partnership with local authorities, school, voluntary organisations and employers. Similar but separate arrangements exist in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

As part of the National Childcare Strategy, there will be a massive expansion in out of school childcare places. In 1998/9 increased funding of £22.1 million will lead to some 40,000 extra childcare places in England. From 1999 the Lottery New Opportunities Fund will invest £220 million in supporting the setting up of new out of school childcare provision in the UK, of which £20 million is for integrated childcare and education projects. The intention is that out of school childcare will become available for every community which needs it, helping up to 1 million children.

Pay

In 1970, before the Equal Pay act was passed, women's average hourly full time earnings were 63% of men's. There has been a slow but steady improvement since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act. While the Office for National Statistics' New Earnings Survey for 1998 shows a slight levelling off of the improvement, it had in fact narrowed in each of the last ten years: women's pay now stands at just over 80% of men's.

Research has shown that there are a number of factors which together cause women's average pay to be lower than men's. They include:

- women's tendency to work in lower paid jobs (i.e. they are less likely to be in more senior, higher paid positions). This is sometimes referred to as vertical occupational segregation;
- the sectors in which women work historically command relatively low levels of pay (caring, nursing, cleaning, retail). This is sometimes known as horizontal occupational segregation;
- the sectors where women workers predominate tend to have a lower status (unequal pay for work of equal value);
- a much greater proportion of women than men work part-time (45% compared with 9%) and a higher proportion of part-time jobs are in lower paying occupations; and

- the effect of women's childbirth and caring responsibilities. Women re-entering the workforce (as opposed to taking maternity leave or career breaks) do so at lower wage rates than men who have had long absences from the labour market.

The labour market is very complex, and analysis is open to a range of interpretations. The Government is committed to taking practical measures to help to close the gender pay gap. The National Minimum Wage will help to reduce the pay gap as more women than men are on rates of pay lower than the national minimum. But it is important too to tackle job segregation. For example, the National Curriculum ensures that both girls and boys study the full range of subjects and therefore have a broad base on which to make career-related choices. Women now comprise 50% of undergraduates. In time, the impact of greater numbers of more highly qualified women, with greater earnings potential, should be reflected in higher actual earnings.

The Part-Time Workers' Directive should also contribute to a narrowing of the pay gap as it requires employers to accord part-time workers conditions and contracts in-line with their full-time counterparts. This should, in turn, have a positive impact on the pay gap by reducing the gap between full and part-time rates of pay. **The Parental Leave Directive** and reform of maternity rights will also enable employees to reconcile their work and family lives.

The **Careers Service** is required to operate an equal opportunities policy that questions stereotypical careers choices. **Initiatives to attract women into non-traditional areas,** such as those taken or supported by the DTI's Science, Engineering and Technology Unit will also broaden women's representation across all sectors of the labour market. The implementation of the **National Childcare Strategy** is a major component in the Government's wider support and encouragement of family friendly working arrangements. There will be particular benefits for women as an increase in quality childcare provision will enable them to maintain continuity of employment.

Outside government, organisations such as **Opportunity 2000** are encouraging employers to look critically at the position of their women employees and set targets to increase women's representation at every level in their workforce. **Trade Unions** are also active in supporting their members in equal pay cases and raising awareness of equal pay issues. Focusing specifically on equal pay the **Equal Opportunities Commission's Code of Practice** published in 1997 provides employers with information and advice on how to review their pay structures to ensure that they are not discriminatory.

Unpaid Work

The Labour Force Survey gives estimates of women working unpaid for a family business in the United Kingdom. In Spring 1998, 74,000 women were so involved compared with 28,000 men. The figures have showed a steady decline since the information was first collected; in Spring 1992 the figures were 126,000 for women and 55,000 for men. They suggest that as the economy picks up more work is done on a paid basis.

International guidelines recognise that unpaid domestic labour makes a significant contribution to the general level of welfare. The Government is actively looking at how it can bring unpaid work into the models used to develop micro and macro economic policy. It also requires the collection of data measuring unpaid activities.

Nearly 3,400 women are classified as Unpaid Family Workers working without pay in a relative's business. 64% of all unpaid family workers are female.

In May 1995, a Time Use module on the Omnibus Survey collected information on how individuals spent their time over a 24 hour period. The survey found that the amount of time spent by people in unpaid production was about one and a half times that spent in paid employment. Men undertook more paid work than women, but women did one and a half times more unpaid work than men.

11.2 Number of minutes spent each day on unpaid production and other activities, for GB May 1995

	ALL	MALE	FEMALE
Unpaid Work:			
Food Production	49	28	68
Care of family/household	71	55	86
Clothing Care	14	3	25
Shopping etc.	36	43	70
Care of Home	56	43	70
Self improvement (Education)	27	33	21
Home Improvement	14	22	6
Other activities:			
Paid Work	168	212	127
Travel	46	50	43
Voluntary work outside household	13	11	15
Total Leisure/Eating	396	410	381
Sleep and rest	536	533	539
All Total*	**1440**	**1440**	**1440**
* including other /missing			

Source : Omnibus Survey, Office for National Statistics .

Data from the Omnibus survey has been used as the basis of an experimental household satellite account, for the UK, published in October 1997. This measured the amount of unpaid productive activities in the household sector. Depending on the assumptions made about the value of such work, its total value was found to range between 40% and 120% of GDP.

The time use data from the Omnibus Survey, while successful in producing aggregate time spent on a broad range of activities, has many limitations. The UK is therefore planning a large-scale household survey of time use. A pilot survey following the methodology developed by Eurostat was carried out in 1997, and funding is currently being sought for the main survey. This will allow greater exploration of the various assumptions linked to valuing unpaid work, whilst at the same time being a valuable source for a wide range of social policy issues.

TRAINING

Public Sector Training Programmes

Since April 1990, a network of employer-led Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) in England and Wales, and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) in Scotland has been responsible for the delivery and development of the Government's training and enterprise programmes. TECs and LECs have a contractual requirement to ensure equal opportunities for women and men, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities and they have a strategic priority to help those at a disadvantage in the labour market find work.

During 1997-98, each TEC updated its equal opportunities strategy in line with the new National Standard which requires them to set quantifiable and time-bound targets for closing gaps in youth and adult training, for both participation and outcomes, by gender, race and disability.

The "positive action" provisions of the Sex Discrimination Acts permit single-sex training and reserved places for under-represented groups in certain circumstances. This has allowed many TECs and LECs to provide a wide range of training to help meet women's needs.

Among trainees on work-based training for adults, which aims to return the long term unemployed and those returning to the labour market to sustainable employment, around 32% of participants are women. Women do not need to be registered unemployed to secure a place if they have been away from the labour market for at least two years. Fifty-two percent of women get a job at the end of training, compared with 43% of men, but most women still tend to choose to train in traditional occupational areas.

Ethnic minority women are more than twice as likely as white women to be on Government training schemes and there is a particularly high concentration of women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds because of these communities' younger age profiles, higher unemployment levels, and their use of those training schemes offering English language training.

WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS

See Article 9.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

The Government is committed to providing an efficient and effective welfare support system for those unable to work and those with family or caring responsibilities.

The UK Social Security System

All aspects of the Social Security system are being reviewed and proposals are being developed to create a modern system which takes account of the real differences in the lives of women and men and meets the needs of both women and men. In July 1998 the Government published a report which analysed the impact of the Social Security system on women. The report set out how the role of women has changed as a result of demographic, economic and social changes. It examined the ways in which the Social Security system affects women, described recent changes to the system which are of particular benefit to women, and identified areas where further steps are required.

Maternity Benefits

The legislation governing the calculation of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) was changed in June 1996. For the first six weeks of maternity leave a woman is entitled to receive SMP equal to 90 per cent of her average earnings. The calculation is based on earnings actually paid in a fixed period prior to the start of maternity leave. In February 1996 the European Court of Justice ruled that maternity pay must reflect any retrospective pay increase which takes effect in the period used to calculate the amount of maternity pay due. This change, in June 1996, was made to reflect the judgement and ensure that the amount of SMP due would be revised to take account of any backdated pay rise which covered payments made to women in the period used to calculate SMP.

In August 1996 SMP became payable to women outside the European Economic Area (EEA) provided they satisfied the qualifying conditions. Previously it was payable only to women who remained within the EEA.

In July 1997 research findings were published which gave a detailed description of maternity rights legislation in the UK and also of the provision and take up of working arrangements which aim to help employees balance their work and family responsibilities. The maternity rights and benefits element of the research explored the effect of the 1994 changes to maternity rights (described in the 3rd report) on women's labour market activity during and after pregnancy and on employers' maternity provision. It also measured the extent of problems faced by employers and women in understanding and complying with the legislative provisions surrounding entitlement to maternity rights and benefits.

The results were encouraging. 88% of women in work while pregnant received financial support while on maternity leave. 83% received Statutory Maternity Pay, and 5 per cent received Maternity Allowance. 20 per cent of those in work had their Statutory Maternity Pay topped up by extra-statutory pay from their employer, compared with 14 per cent in 1988. This was a small but welcome demonstration that employers are recognising the benefits of providing financial support for women on maternity leave.

However there is more to be done. The Government has already announced that maternity leave will be extended from 14 weeks to 18 weeks, and that women will be entitled to extend maternity leave after one year with an employer instead of the current two years. As part of its rolling programme of family-friendly initiatives, the Government will be looking at ways of extending and simplifying the current maternity arrangements and making them easier to understand and operate.

Statutory Sick Pay

In April 1996 Statutory Sick Pay became payable to qualifying employees working outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Previously it was payable only to employees within the EEA. In October 1996, the Court of Appeal clarified the Statutory Sick Pay entitlement of short-term contract workers and agency workers by ruling that if an employee has been continuously employed for three months or more on a contract which was originally for one month or less, then their contract becomes an indefinite one. This judgement was in line with Statutory Sick Pay rules but served to underline the entitlement of those workers who in the main are women.

Back to Work Bonus

The Back to Work Bonus scheme, introduced in October 1996, is a work incentive scheme designed to encourage people to keep in touch with the labour market by undertaking small amounts of work whilst claiming benefit, and to provide an incentive and reward to claimants to move into work which takes them out of unemployment. There is no difference in the treatment of women in the provision of a Back to Work Bonus. However, the scheme is of particular value to women as it fully reflects their position in the labour market: recent research has found that unemployed women are more likely to work part-time and are more likely to be living with a partner than unemployed men.

The scheme enables people who receive Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support (and their partners, if they are claiming for one) to build up a lump sum based on earnings from part-time work. The maximum bonus which can be accrued is £1,000. In the majority of cases, a bonus payment will be made where the claimant or partner moves into work or increases their hours of work or earnings, so that entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support ceases.

Benefits for Mothers

Family Credit continues to help working parents with low earnings and to be paid to the mother in two parent families. From July 1995, an extra credit (currently worth £10.80 a week) was introduced for people who work 30 hours or more a week. Around 115,000 lone parents (mostly mothers) are currently benefiting from this change. Family Credit currently helps around 370,000 female lone parents to supplement their earnings. Lone parents receive the same adult credit as a couple, and the first £15 of child maintenance payments is disregarded.

From October 1999 Family Credit will be replaced by a new Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC). The WFTC will be more generous than Family Credit and will help around 400,000 more families. It will guarantee every working family with a full-time worker an income of at least £180 a week and ensure that no family with earnings of less than £220 a week (half of average earnings) will pay net income tax.

Couples will be able to choose whether the credit is paid to the mother or to the father.

Child Benefit provides virtually all families, around 7 million, with a contribution towards the cost of bringing up children. It is normally paid to the mother. Both the higher rate for the eldest child and the rate for each subsequent child continue to be uprated each year in line with prices. In addition, from April 1999, the rate for the eldest child will be increased by an extra £2.50 a week (£2.60 after uprating), with corresponding increases in the Family Premium in the income-related benefits to ensure the poorest families will benefit from this increase. Family Premium being an additional amount of benefit paid to families in receipt of Income Support, including lone parents. As a result and following the general uprating this will increase the amount paid for the first child by £2.95, from £11.45 a week to £14.40 from April 1999. This is the largest increase ever. The rate for subsequent children will increase from £9.30 to £9.60 a week.

In April 1997 One Parent Benefit was incorporated into the main Child Benefit rates to create a new higher rate of Child Benefit for the only or eldest child of a lone parent. Lone parents, 90% of whom are women, receive £17.10 for their only or eldest child, tax free. Around 1 million lone parents receive the lone parent rate of Child Benefit.

From July 1998 new lone mothers received the same rate of Child Benefit for their only or eldest child as mothers with partners, but existing recipients continue to receive the higher rate as long as they continue to satisfy the entitlement conditions.

People whose resources are below prescribed levels may be able to claim Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Income Support is a non-contributory benefit which is not available to people who work for 16 hours or more a week or whose partner works for 24 hours or more a week. Families claiming Income Support receive a Family Premium and there is a part-time earnings disregard of £10 a week for a couple or £15 a week for a lone parent. Around 961,000 lone parents receive Income Support, the vast majority of whom are women. Families and lone parents also receive additional premiums with Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. An earnings disregard of £25 a week applies in these benefits for lone parents, and there is a £15 a week maintenance disregard.

From April 1997 the additional premium paid to lone parents in Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit was incorporated into the Family Premium to create a higher rate of Family Premium for lone parents called Family Premium (Lone Parent). The Family Premium (Lone Parent) in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit is higher than the corresponding premium in Income Support.

From April 1998 new lone mothers received the same rate of Family Premium as mothers with partners, but existing recipients continue to receive Family Premium (Lone Parent) as long as they continue to satisfy the entitlement conditions. There will be a £2.50 increase in the standard family premium from April 1999. This will follow a £2.50 increase in the child allowance for the under elevens in all of the income-related benefits from November 1998.

Childcare Disregard

A childcare disregard introduced in October 1994 in Family Credit, Disability Working Allowance, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Benefit, was designed to be of particular help to lone parents. It initially allowed for childcare costs of up to a maximum of £40 a week for children under the age of 11, to be deducted from net earnings when calculating benefit entitlement. This was increased to £60 a week from April 1996 and the qualifying age extended to the September following the 11th birthday from October 1997. From June 1998 further enhancements to the disregard allow for a maximum disregard of £100 for families with childcare costs for two or more children and extend help to children up to the September following their 12th birthday.

From October 1999, Working Families Tax Credit and Disabled Persons Tax Credit will replace Family Credit and Disability Working Allowance respectively. These new tax credits will include improved childcare support in the form of a childcare tax credit to replace the current disregard in Family Credit and Disability Working Allowance. The Childcare Tax Credit will provide help with up to 70 per cent of eligible childcare costs, up to a limit on the costs of £100 for families with one child and £150 for families with two or more children. This will be a significant improvement on the existing childcare disregard. The maximum help will go to the lowest earners and, for recipients of the Working Families Tax Credit, to those earning up to £17,000 a year.

At the same time as the Childcare Tax Credit is introduced, and in order to ensure consistency with the more generous level of childcare support which the Tax Credit will provide, the maximum amount which can be disregarded in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for families with eligible children will be increased to £70 a week where there is one child and £105 a week where there are two or more children.

Widows' Benefits

Widows' Benefits continue to be available to women below state pension age. Entitlements are based on the National Insurance contributions paid by the deceased husband. Around 300,000 women currently receive Widows' Benefits. The Government published a consultation document *Support in Bereavement* in November 1998 setting out detailed proposals for the reform of Widows' Benefits.

The proposals are to:

- pay a lump sum of £2,000 immediately on bereavement;
- pay a Widowed Parent's Allowance until the youngest child in the family ceases full-time education;
- pay a Bereavement Allowance to widows and widowers aged 45 and over with no dependent children for six months.

The benefits payable under the reformed scheme would be available to widowed women and men. Proposals would not be introduced before April 2001 and none of the changes would affect existing widows, people over State pension age or war widows.

Pensions

The state pension, described in previous reports, continues to be the most important source of post-retirement income for women. Whilst the proportion of women receiving a full basic pension in their own right has continued to increase and is now around 14 per cent, it is still significantly less than the equivalent figure for men, which stands at around 94 per cent. The previous report set out some of the reasons for the disparity between women and men earning a full pension and measures taken to improve women's pension entitlements.

The Pensions Act 1995 equalises state pension age for men and women at 65 by 2020, as well as the age up to which men and women are required to pay National Insurance contributions, and introduces a fully equalised state pension scheme. Older women are not affected by the change to the state pension age, which will be phased in over a ten-year period from 2010. Other improvements introduced in the Act will help low-paid women to improve their entitlements under the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS), by treating income from Family Credit as earnings. This will help many lone mothers who receive Family Credit and women who are the main earners in a family. The value of the enhancement will depend on individuals' earning patterns, but will be greatest for those with long periods of consistently low earnings.

Occupational Pensions

The Government is committed to improving second tier pension provision, particularly amongst women. Whilst the proportion of women who have occupational and personal pensions is increasing, it is still below that of men.

In January 1996 the Equal Treatment provisions of the 1995 Pensions Act came into force along with associated Equal Treatment Regulations. These provisions brought domestic law into line with rulings of the European Court of Justice in respect of benefit issues and the amended European Community Directive on Equal Treatment between Men and Women in Occupational Social Security Schemes (EC Directive 96/97).

In the early 1990s the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled on numerous cases concerning equal treatment between men and women in relation to access to, and benefits from, occupational pension schemes. In May 1995, amending regulations came into force in the UK which, in effect, outlawed indirect discrimination between men and women regarding access to occupational pension schemes where there was no objective justification for the difference. The major impact of the regulations was to outlaw most requirements which denied part-time employees access to occupational pension schemes. As the vast majority of part-time employees are women, the ECJ rulings and domestic legislation have improved access to occupational pension schemes for a significant number of women.

Pensions Green Paper

The Government's Pensions Green Paper, *A new contract for welfare: Partnership in Pensions*, was published in December 1998. It is another major plank in welfare reform, based around the principle of work for those who can and security for those who cannot.

The Green Paper sets out proposals for pensions reform, including:

- stakeholder pension schemes to provide secure, flexible and value-for-money second pensions for those earning moderate incomes from £9,000 a year upwards, many of whom are women, often working part-time or with intermittent work patterns, who do not currently have an opportunity to join a good occupational pension scheme;

- State Second Pension to offer people earning less than £9,000 but more than the lower earnings limit of £3,300, many of whom are women, a second pension equivalent to double the amount that the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) now pays someone earning £9,000 a year;
- carers, disabled and mothers with young children to receive flat-rate credits to the new State Second Pension. In broad terms, they will get £1 a week pension for each qualifying year of caring. There will be no limit on the number of years of caring which are treated in this way; and
- Minimum Income Guarantee to offer a decent income in retirement for all. The long term aim is that it should rise in line with earnings so that all pensioners can share in the rising prosperity of the nation.

Help for Poorest Pensioners

However, it will be well into the next millennium before a new pensions system can be put in place. The Government has announced a number of measures to provide more immediate help to the poorest pensioners, who are predominantly women.

In July 1998 the Government announced a £2.5 billion package for pensioners, including £0.5 billion for Winter Fuel Payments. From April 1999 Income Support for pensioners will be increased so that single pensioners will have a guaranteed minimum income of £75 a week and couples at least £116.60 a week - three times the amount they would expect from normal uprating in line with price increases. Pensioners not on Income Support, but who are receiving Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit, will also receive benefit increases above the rate of normal uprating. The Government has recently completed nine pilot projects which were designed to test different means of encouraging pensioners to claim the Income Support they are entitled to. Decisions will be made on further action when the results of the pilot projects have been evaluated. All pensioners will be entitled to free eye tests and concessionary travel.

Winter Fuel Payments

In November 1997, the Government announced that £400 million would be spent on Winter Fuel Payments for pensioners over two years. During the winter of 1997/98, help was provided to almost ten million pensioners in over seven million households. Pensioners in receipt of Income Support received £50 towards their winter heating costs. All other eligible pensioner households received £20.

In July 1998 the Government announced that the scheme would continue beyond 1999/2000, with every eligible pensioner household entitled to £20. Women make up the majority of the single pensioners eligible for a payment.

PENSIONS ON DIVORCE

Pension Earmarking

The Pensions Act 1995 made a number of changes, coming into force in 1996, to the treatment of pensions on divorce, and in particular to the arrangements whereby part or all of a pension scheme member's pension rights could be "earmarked" so that pension payments in future would be made to his or her former spouse. Key elements of the provisions include:

- clarification of the court's duty to take into account pension rights when considering financial provision on divorce;
- powers for a court to order a pension scheme to make pension payments direct to the former spouse (so that she or he need not necessarily rely on the scheme member passing on the payments to her/him); and
- powers to enable the courts to make orders to allow a former spouse to benefit from a lump sum payable on the death of the scheme member to whom she or he had been married.

Pension Sharing

Under earmarking provisions, the title to the pension rights remains with the pension scheme member. The provisions do not allow a clean financial break in a divorce settlement and they leave the former spouse at risk of losing the intended retirement income if the scheme member dies.

The Government is therefore committed to introducing pension sharing as an option for divorcing couples. It has developed its policy proposals in partnership with the pensions industry, family lawyers and groups representing divorcing couples, and has consulted on draft legislation which would allow pension rights to be treated like other assets and the whole, or a proportion, of their value to transferred from one spouse to the other as part of the financial settlement. It is planned to introduce legislation to this effect in 1999.

Pension sharing will apply equally to both men and women. The current distribution of pension rights, however, means the main beneficiaries of pension sharing are expected to be women. Pension sharing will allow a divorcing wife to obtain a fair, secure share of the pension rights that have accrued in her husband's name.

CARERS

Around 324,000 people now receive Invalid Care Allowance, of whom almost 75 per cent are women. Around 183,000 people receive the Carer Premium in Income Support by virtue of entitlement to Invalid Care Allowance and others receive a Carer Premium via other income-based benefits. The Government announced a review of carers and its intention to produce a national strategy for carers. This is expected to report findings later this year.

HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK

Under the Control of Lead At Work (CLAW) Regulations 1998 and their Northern Ireland equivalents, workers significantly exposed to lead have the levels of lead in their blood measured and where this reaches a specified level, the worker is normally suspended. To safeguard any developing foetus, the suspension level for women of reproductive capacity is half the equivalent level that applies to adult males (aged 18 and over) and to women who are not capable of having children. Additionally, when a woman does become pregnant, she should notify her employer who will then remove her from work involving significant exposure to lead.

Research on Reproductive Health risks to Female Workers include:

1. The Health of Offspring of Parents Occupationally Exposed to Radiation (Nuclear Industry Family Study)

The Nuclear Industry Family Study is investigating the health of children of employees of the United Kingdom Atomic Authority (AEA), the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) and Urenco Capenhurst Ltd. (UCL). Information about the health of children of current and past workers has been collected using postal questionnaires. The initial stage asked employees about all their children/pregnancies. There is a follow up with parents who reported children with serious illnesses such as cancer.

2. An investigation into the Reproductive Toxicity of Perchloroethylene.

In 1994, HSE commissioned a retrospective occupational cohort study of reproductive outcome in women currently or previously employed in dry-cleaning shops of laundry units. This project finished recently. The results suggest that there may be a link between operating dry-cleaning machines and a higher than normal rate of miscarriage. The study found that machine operators had a miscarriage rate of about one in six pregnancies compared with around one in eight in the general population. The risk to other workers in dry-cleaners (i.e. those not operating machines) was the same as the general population. Over 5000 questionnaires were sent out, for which 3000 replies were received.

SCOTLAND

Background

Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships are the young people's training programme in Scotland. The programme is delivered by Scottish Enterprise and Highland and Islands Enterprise throughout the Enterprise Network. It was phased in across the country from 1992 and achieved national coverage from April 1995. The target group is 16-17 year olds, the Youth Training Guarantee Group, although LECs have discretion to fund training for young people aged 18 years and over. Currently, there are around 38,500 Skillseekers, including over 9,500 on Modern Apprenticeships.

Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships aim to provide young people with a valid work-based route to skills and qualifications. The key elements of Skillseekers are: the training must lead to a qualification up to SVQ level III; an individual training plan; payment on achievement (output based funding); and employer involvement. Modern Apprenticeships are aimed primarily at 16-17 year olds to enable them to train for jobs at craft, technician and trainee management level to a minimum qualification of SVQ Level III, and must include core skills. LECs do also have the discretion to fund 18 year olds and over but training should be completed by the 25th birthday.

In Scotland, Skillseekers has succeeded in attracting a number of employers to give young people employed status and 67% of Skillseekers now receive a wage. Those on employer placements receive a training allowance which is normally around £40-45 per week.

Information Relating to Women's Issues

There are now 67 Modern Apprenticeship frameworks endorsed for use in Scotland and there are currently approximately 9,500 Modern Apprenticeships. It should be noted, however, that uptake has mainly been in the "traditional areas" e.g. engineering, construction etc. and that there is under-representation both of females and ethnic minorities (also a feature of the wider Skillseekers programme). In *Opportunity Scotland*, the Lifelong Learning Paper published in September 1998, the Government has set a target of 15,000 Modern Apprenticeships by 2002 and made a commitment to improve take up by females and ethnic minorities.

Following *Opportunity Scotland*, Scottish Enterprise have started working towards increasing the number of young women on Skillseekers and Modern Apprenticeships by discussing with their LECs the best way forward. Highlands and Islands Enterprise are working with their LECs, training providers and employers to encourage the recruitment of young women onto the Modern Apprenticeships programme.

Further action is being taken by Modern Apprenticeships Implementation Group (MAIG) who are also looking at how the gender imbalance and take up in non-traditional sectors of Modern Apprenticeships can be improved. ____

Childcare

A Green Paper *entitled Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland* was issued in May 1998.

A summit conference on childcare was held in Edinburgh in June 1998, chaired by the Minister for Children's Issues. The issue was also debated in the Scottish Grand Committee in July 1998.

In Scotland £4.7 million extra has been made available, mainly to local authorities, to develop childcare provision. £2million of this is earmarked for creating new and sustaining existing places. Extra money has also been made available to local authorities to set up local childcare partnerships, founded on early years forums.

Funding of £42 million has been set aside over the next 3 years to develop work in support of young children and their families to encourage social exclusion. A further £29 million over three years has been identified for local authority care of children in need.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Employment Services and Initiatives in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the Fair Play initiative was launched in 1996. The Fair Play Steering Group includes representatives from the public, private, trade union and voluntary sectors and the business community. The Group acts as a catalyst by working with others to promote equality of opportunity for women in Northern Ireland. In addition, Fair Play itself has hosted many successful conferences and events aimed at raising the profile of women in business and in public life in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Local Enterprise and Development Agency published a booklet in 1996 entitled *Working for Women*. This is aimed at encouraging potential women entrepreneurs by describing experiences of female role models and listing sources of advice and assistance.

Choice of Employment

In Northern Ireland women account for 16% of those who are self-employed and 48% of employees. 86% of female employees work in the service sector. Only 9% of working women are managers/administrators compared with 24% of men.

The Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) in Northern Ireland recognises that more women could be running their own businesses and it therefore operates a policy of equal opportunity which ensures fair treatment for all. LEDU is proactive about encouraging women in business. For women thinking of starting up their own companies, the Enterprise Agency network, which LEDU has helped establish and support, provides a wide range of programmes and initiatives, many of which are specifically designed for women.

A range of women's programmes are run each year through the province-wide network of Enterprise Agencies. These programmes cover a range of important topics from women returning to the workplace to business opportunities for women in rural areas and are tailored to suit the individual needs of the female participants. Between 100 and 150 women participate in these courses each year.

In 1997, LEDU, in conjunction with the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, completed research on the issues and obstacles to women getting into self employment. This research helped inform LEDU's Corporate Plan for the period 1998-2000.

Pay

In April 1997 in Northern Ireland, women's average hourly earnings (excluding overtime) were 83% of men's.

Childcare as a Barrier to Employment

Lack of childcare facilities remains the single major barrier to access for women wishing to avail themselves of training and employment opportunities. In Northern Ireland, the Training and Employment Agency (T&EA), in recognition of this, has been a member of the Inter-Departmental Group on Early Years and has been involved in the development and delivery of the Childhood Fund (see below). In addition, it has been involved in a number of specific initiatives that take into account the needs of those trying to balance training, work and family. These include:

- liaison with childcare representative groups in relation to the provision of childcare places and trained childcare staff, particularly in relation to the New Deal for Lone Parents;
- membership of the Regional Consultative Forum, established to ensure co-ordination, co-operation and enhanced communication at local level between the statutory voluntary and private sectors across education, care and employment; and,
- continued T&EA support for the cost of childcare for lone parents within the training environment, whether the child is in registered care or cared for by relatives.

Childcare Provision

Childcare in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the UK, is provided in a range of settings within the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. Between 1990 and 1997 the overall number of day care places available in Northern Ireland increased by 43% to 37,948. This can be broken down as follows:

11.3 Childcare Provision in Northern Ireland in 1997

	Places
Day Nurseries	3,794
Playgroups	16,441
Childminders	17,713
Total in Daycare	37,948

Source, Northern Ireland Office Department of Health & Social Security

Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy

A Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy is being produced to complement the national strategy published in May 1998. The strategy will look at the role of parents and employers and consider issues about choice and affordability as well as identifying action to increase provision and improve quality. Government initiatives to increase and improve provision in Northern Ireland include:

- providing more pre-school education places for 3 and 4 year olds from September 1998 through a pre-school education expansion programme;
- the out of schools activities initiative, announced in the Government's White Paper - The People's lottery, to support out of school activities;
- a network of centres, which will combine care and education for young children and support for their families; and
- training in childcare and playcare.

In line with the aims of the National Childcare Strategy, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland DOE (NI) has developed a Nursery Subsidy Scheme to assist staff in making childcare arrangements. At present, 44 places are offered and are filled by random draw on a regular basis to help parents (mainly women) balance work and childcare needs.

The Childhood Fund

The development of early years services in Northern Ireland has been heavily influenced in recent years by the European Childhood Fund, part of the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. To date £17.3 million has been allocated to 649 projects covering a wide range of early years provision, including playgroups, playcare, nursery schools, afterschool groups, mother and toddler groups, family support schemes, crèches, family centres and youth groups. It will be some time before it will be possible to quantify the full impact of the funding, but by September 1997 an additional 37,000 places had been provided in a range of childcare settings.

Early Years Development Fund

The Early Years Development Fund has over £300,000 available annually from the Northern Ireland Office and supports initiatives to improve and extend early years services. It is focused primarily on children under five and is targeted at families experiencing disadvantage or living in areas of high social and/or economic deprivation including those in rural isolation. Currently the Fund targets children with disabilities. Since 1996 it has been administered through Area Early Years Committees with the European Childhood Fund.

Public sector training programmes

Females are well represented in Northern Ireland Training & Employment Agency programmes in relation to their numbers in the target groups, with an overall participation rate of 40% (September 1997). The training areas which females occupy are mainly those which lead to low paid, low skill occupations. In order to redress this situation the Agency has developed a proactive approach of liaison and consultation with local women's groups, including those representing ethnic minority women. The aim is to encourage women's access to vocational and non-traditional training, science, technology and continuing education through a variety of measures such as:

- a clear statement of equality of opportunity as one of the Agency's **strategic aims;**
- the establishment of an **Equality Subgroup** of the main Agency Board to advise on equality issues;
- the development of a **personal career planning strategy,** by the Agency's careers officers, tailor-made to help young people in school overcome obstacles or the stereotypes which could prevent them realising their ambitions;
- the delivery of seminars in schools to promote the **Industrial Scholarship Scheme** (ISS) to girls, encouraging the use of female lecturers to potential ISS students and presentations on good "gender equal" recruitment practice for the Sandwich Grant Scheme which is delivered to participating companies by the Universities on behalf of the Agency;
- developing strategies to encourage more females to take up training in traditionally male dominated training environments through supporting organisations aimed at encouraging women to consider non-traditional trades;
- the development of **programmes for women managers** with the aim of assisting them to achieve a recognised qualification at NVQ level 4 and 5; and,
- the development of a **women's network** providing training and development seminars for women managers and business owners.

Open Learning Access Centres

In the late 1980s Open Learning Access Centres (OLAC) were established in Northern Ireland to provide an alternative option to traditional education and training opportunities for those who felt intimidated by the idea of return to study. There are now a total of 12 centres located mostly in the Greater Belfast area. The ability to access part-time study at a time and place which suits their needs has proved particularly beneficial to women returners.

In 1997/98, 70% of the total participants in OLAC programmes were female. Women returners accounted for 30% of the total.

The current Network of Open Learning Access Centres favours the female population in the immediate catchment area of Centres. The Training and Employment Agency in Northern Ireland is attempting to redress this situation in two ways. Firstly, by the provision of free consultancy advice to any organisation to enable them to introduce the OLAC concept to their training delivery and secondly, by influencing managers of other funding programmes to build into those programmes the key features of the OLAC experience.

WALES

Employment services and initiatives in Wales

A smaller proportion of women (aged 16-60) in Wales are economically active than in the UK as a whole (Wales 69%, UK 73%) and the figure is also significantly lower than for men (Wales 79%, UK 85%). There has been a gradual increase in female activity rates in Wales but there is still a long way to go before rates approach those for the UK as a whole. Women are particularly well represented in the health, hotels and restaurant, and education sectors. In terms of occupation, women are relatively poorly represented in management and administration (women 32%, men 68%), professionals (women 37%, men 63%) and plant and machine operatives (women 21%, men 79%). About 24% of the self employed in Wales are women.

About 44% of women in Wales work part-time compared with 10% of men and this reduces further the contribution of women in the labour market. Wages are relatively low for both men and women in Wales - around 89% of the Great Britain average.

Generally the same government policies in this area apply in Wales as in England. But some additional initiatives have been taken.

Chwarae Teg (Fair Play) is an all-Wales partnership organisation that aims to maximise the participation of women in the labour market. It does this by tackling the barriers women face and raising awareness among employers, trade unions, training providers, central and local government and economic development agencies about the "mainstream" role that women can and should play. It also provides advice and training to women and employers and promotes good practice particularly on flexible working, childcare and training. It is taking an active role in the development of the Wales Childcare Strategy and the Government's New Deal policies.

Several enterprise agencies in Wales offer tailored services to help women who wish to establish their own businesses. For example, the "Women mean Business" project run by Antur Dwyryd has increased the number of enquiries from women to the extent that they now have more than twice as many women as men registered on training courses.

The National Childcare Strategy for Wales has some additional elements to England. In particular, in addition to the Out of School Childcare Scheme run by Training and Enterprise Councils there is a scheme run by Chwarae Teg to support projects for pre-school age children. The particular focus of this scheme has been to try and demonstrate to employers the advantages of participating in the provision of childcare for their workers. There is also an all-Wales childcare information service run by Chwarae Teg.

ARTICLE 12

WOMEN'S HEALTH

1. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of healthcare in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to healthcare service, including those related to family planning.*
2. *Notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph 1 of the article, States Parties shall ensure to women appropriate services in connection with pregnancy, confinement and the post-natal period granting free services where necessary, as well as adequate nutrition during pregnancy and lactation.*

Introduction

The Government is committed to tackling the root causes of ill health and reducing the worst aspects of inequalities in health for the population of Britain. The policies are designed to tackle the reasons why people get sick, and thereby alleviate the experience of social and economic exclusion which underlie the variations in health between rich and poor, black and white, men and women.

The White Paper *The New NHS: Modern and Dependable* was published in December 1997. It set out how the Government will move away from a market model of health care, and describes a 10 year programme of modernisation, with an emphasis from the outset on measurable improvements in health and health care. Among the commitments symbolising the new approach is an undertaking that by April 1999 everyone with suspected breast cancer will be able to see a specialist within 2 weeks of their GP requesting an urgent appointment.

The Green Paper *Our Healthier Nation* was published in February 1998. It states the Government's commitment to improve the health of the population as a whole by increasing the length of people's lives and the number of years free from illness, and to improve the health of the worst off and narrow the health gap. Four national targets are envisaged - by 2010, to reduce deaths from heart disease and stroke by a third, cancer deaths by a fifth, accidents by a fifth and suicide by a sixth to combat the biggest causes of premature death/avoidable ill health. The *Our Healthier Nation* programme will be able to harness local stakeholders such as local authorities, schools, places of worship and neighbourhood groups to disseminate health messages.

The White Paper provides a framework to improve health and deliver appropriate and meaningful services to the local population. The White Paper introduces health improvement programmes, health action zones, and primary care groups. An example of a Health Action Zone programme is in Luton where the health needs of Asian women in particular will be addressed. There will be a focus on increasing the uptake of cervical screening, the development of community based colposcopy services with a female consultant, and a partnership between the National Health Service (NHS) and the Asian community to address child development problems.

Health Action Zones will bring about empowerment of users of services, encourage patients to take responsibility for their own health and decisions, and engage front line staff in strategic planning and supporting innovation.

Women's health is firmly on the Department of Health's agenda and will remain so. In particular, it is well known that women in ethnic minority communities have had difficulties in obtaining access to services and that in some areas services have not been appropriate to their needs. The Department has made it a priority to address this by targeting the ethnic minority population with health promotion messages explaining the health benefits that can be gained.

For example, the Department of Health has funded projects in Leicester and Bradford where large numbers of Pakistani women live. In Bradford, the Department funded a community based model where bilingual health promotion workers not only explained the procedures and the reasons for them, but they were able to convince the women about the real health benefits which could affect them personally. These projects have been remarkably successful and they are now being expanded to other parts of the country and within ethnic communities.

Since 1989 the Department has made available grants in excess of £5 million to fund voluntary groups and others to help establish the service requirements of black and minority ethnic groups, and to promote the provision of services which meet those requirements. In addition, the Department has promoted a range of service quality measures in the NHS intended to encourage the provision of services for such groups.

Acheson Report

An independent inquiry into inequalities in health was established by the Secretary of State for Health in July 1997. It was led by Sir Donald Acheson, a former Chief Medical Officer, whose report was published in November 1998. This made 39 wide-ranging recommendations and examined, among other things, issues of gender and the needs of families with children.

Ministers are firmly committed to taking action to redress the effects of health inequalities. This was identified as one of the key aims of the Green Paper, *Our Healthier Nation,* and a shared lead priority for health and social services in national priorities guidance issued by the Department of Health in September 1998. Action is also being taken through a broad range of Government initiatives, notably under the umbrella of the Social Exclusion Unit's report, *Bringing Britain Together.*

The Acheson recommendations will be considered as part of the development of the Government's new health strategy, about which a White Paper will be published early in 1999.

WOMEN'S HEALTH ISSUES

Family Planning Services

In Health Service Guidelines issued in 1992, Health Authorities were informed that they are expected to ensure that family planning services are available on a self-referral basis to all comers. Factors to consider are: regularity of services and hours of availability, scope for evening and weekend provision; geographical accessibility of family doctors (GPs) and clinic services; choice between appointment and "walk-in" services; availability of free pregnancy testing and onward referral for medical advice; and effective arrangements for the provision of emergency contraception.

Family planning services are available from specialist clinics and family doctors (GPs). Family planning advice and contraceptives are free to all under the NHS.

In 1995 approximately 70% of women in Great Britain aged between 16 and 49 practised some form of contraception - a figure that has remained fairly constant over the last 15 years. The proportion of women in that age group using the pill is 25% - with the proportion of women aged 35-39 using the pill doubling from 1986 to 1993. The proportion of women relying on sterilisation (either of themselves or their partner) has fluctuated around 24% since 1986, but among those aged 30-34 and 35-39 the proportion has fallen considerably since 1986, while it has increased from 35% to 46% among women aged 45-49. No information is collected on the use of family planning services by men.

In England three-quarters of women receive family planning services through the family doctor. The proportion is higher for Wales. The Government provides funding to the Family Planning Association, Brook Advisory Centres and Marriage Care.

Sex and Relationship Education

In November 1997, the Minister for Public Health set up task groups to consider sex and relationships education, vulnerable and hard to reach groups, commissioning and providing family planning services and research. The Prime Minister announced in July 1998 that the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) would report to Ministers on teenage parenthood early in 1999, building on work begun by the Department of Health. The SEU report will be built on evidence based on research and best practice.

The role of sex and relationships education in schools in helping to reduce teenage pregnancies will be discussed as part of the Social Exclusion Unit's report. The Personal, Social and Health Education Advisory Group's terms of reference asked them to consider sex and relationships education as part of a wider framework for PSHE in schools.

Teenage Pregnancies

The Government has set a broad social agenda to tackle joblessness, low educational standards and social exclusion. Teenage pregnancy has been identified as a specific area on which to develop a more focused approach, given that such pregnancies can be both a symptom and a cause of social exclusion. England has one of the highest rates of teenage conceptions in the developed world. Under 16 rates (13-15 year olds) have risen for 11 out of the last 16 years for which figures are available (1980-1996). They have risen for the last three years in succession. Teenage (13-19 year olds) rates also continue to rise. In 1996 there were 9.3 conceptions per thousand girls in England.

There is a wide variation across the country and wide variations within each health authority area, with a strong correlation between measures of social deprivation, educational attainment and educational prospects and rates of teenage conceptions.

In general, both conception rates and births are higher in more socially deprived areas and in areas with poorly distributed welfare services. The proportion of births is also higher in these areas. The social and economic burden of unintended conceptions may therefore fall more heavily in disadvantaged areas. There may be factors which predispose young people and families towards disadvantage and deprivation. Children of teenage parents growing up in relative poverty and family conflicts have poor educational and health outcomes. They may also be, in turn, more vulnerable to the circumstances which facilitate conceptions and lead to early parenthood. Disadvantaged young people may lack aspiration, role models, opportunities and have lower expectations. In contrast, higher educational attainment is strongly linked with deferring pregnancy and with a lower rate of teenage conceptions.

There is evidence that linking sex and relationship education in schools to access to contraceptive services increases its effectiveness. One of the Department of Health's task groups is specifically considering access to services, ensuring that young people's services meet their needs in terms of opening times, staffing, location and trust. An important consideration is confidentiality, so that young people feel safe and so that there is understanding across health education and social services.

The Government's Social Exclusion Unit is working with other Departments, building on the work already undertaken by the Department of Health, to develop an integrated strategy to cut rates of teenage parenthood, particularly under-age parenthood, and propose better solutions to combat the risk of social exclusion for vulnerable teenagers and their children.

Maternity Services

The principle of woman-centred maternity care set out in the Expert Maternity Group's Report *Changing Childbirth* is now an integral part of mainstream maternity services. Women's views are taken into account and their preferences respected. The Changing Childbirth Implementation Team, set up by the Department of Health to oversee implementation of the Report, continued for longer than originally planned and was finally disbanded in March 1998. A report detailing the progress and outcomes of the development projects funded as part of the *Changing Childbirth* initiative was issued in August 1998. The Implementation Team was highly successful in gaining the co-operation and commitment of professional organisations and consumer groups in promoting woman-centred care. Good progress has been made in developing readily available information sources - ensuring women are getting full information and choices throughout pregnancy and childbirth. It has also been successful in creating widespread consumer awareness about maternity services; and promoting effective local Maternity Services Liaison Committees where purchasers, providers and users of maternity services develop services in partnership.

In March 1997, the Audit Commission report *First Class Delivery* highlighted that the majority of women are happy with the ante-natal care they receive. 90% were happy with the midwifery care, and 80% with the medical care.

The Department of Health has produced a leaflet *How to get the best from maternity services* which describes choices available in maternity care, and where to get information about local services. The leaflet is available in 11 different languages, in Braille and on audiotape.

The *Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths 1994-96* was published in November 1998. The report shows that the number of women dying from conditions associated with pregnancy remains low, and the small increase recorded is a direct result of better reporting systems.

The Department of Health is currently looking at ways of tackling the causes of low birthweight as part of its wider public health strategy. The difference between richer and poorer areas is a cause for concern, as are the marked social class differences. These need to be tackled in any strategy for improving the health of the nation, but there are no simple remedies and a broad approach is needed to the problems of maternity poverty.

Another issue being monitored is the caesarean section rate which has risen from 5% in 1973 to 15% of deliveries in 1994/95 with local variations. The reasons for the increase are complex e.g. technical advances, increased safety of the procedure, changes in age profile, women's choice, clinician's fear of litigation and hospital convenience. Almost half of all caesareans are planned in advance because of factors identified during pregnancy. There is ongoing professional and public debate about the rate and the causes behind it.

Breastfeeding

The Government is fully committed to the promotion of breastfeeding. The report of the 1995 Quinquennial Survey on Infant Feeding practice, published in May 1997, showed that between 1990 and 1995 breastfeeding rates increased from 64% to 68%.

The Department of Health actively promotes breastfeeding by:

- providing financial support to the National Network of breastfeeding Co-ordinators and the three main voluntary organisations, the National Childbirth Trust, La Leche League and the Association of Breastfeeding Mothers;
- supporting National Breastfeeding Awareness Week each year to increase public awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding;
- supporting research through the Quinquennial Surveys of Infant Feeding; and
- publishing expert advice on breastfeeding through its advisory committees.

Abortion in the United Kingdom

The Abortion Act 1967 applies to England, Scotland and Wales. A pregnancy may only be terminated if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith, that an abortion is justified within the terms of the Act, in the light of their clinical judgement of all the particular circumstances of the individual case.

The abortion rate rose in the first quarter of 1996 and since then has remained at a significantly higher level. The number of single women having an abortion has roughly doubled over the past twenty years, but there were fewer abortions among married women. In 1997 69% of abortions were performed on single women and 67% of abortions involved women aged 20 to 34, whether single or married.

12.1 Abortions in England and Wales between 1994 - 1997

		RESIDENTS				NON-RESIDENTS		
Year	**Total**	**Total for all**	**NHS**	**Agency**	**Non-NHS Total**	**Total for all**	**NHS**	**Non-NHS Total**
1994	166,876	156,539	85,243	19,551	51,745	10,337	87	10,250
1995	163,638	154,315	84,478	24,363	45,474	9,323	101	9,222
1996	177,495	167,916	88,410	33,255	46,251	9,579	110	9,469
1997	179,590	170,005	86,305	37,453	46,247	9,585	90	9,495

Source: Office for National Statistics

Following a change to the Abortion Act in 1991, the upper limit for the majority of abortions is 24 weeks. The grounds on which abortion can be carried out later than the 24 week limit are: to save a pregnant women's life; to prevent grave permanent injury to the pregnant woman's health; or where there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped. In 1996 there were 177,495 abortions performed in England and Wales of which 107 were over 24 weeks gestation. In 1997, 12% of abortions were carried out on women more than 12 weeks pregnant, compared with 22% in 1971.

In England and Wales in 1997, 73% of abortions performed on residents of England and Wales were performed by the NHS. In Scotland, more than 98% of abortions are performed under the NHS and of that figure, more than 90% are carried out prior to 14 weeks' gestation. None of the small number of Scottish private hospitals licensed to carry out terminations accepts patients of more than 12 weeks' gestation. The level of gynaecological provision including abortion, like other provision within the National Health Service, is decided by individual health purchasers.

The Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland. Abortions are illegal in Northern Ireland except where necessary to save the life of the mother or where continuation of the pregnancy would involve risk of serious injury to her physical or mental health. In 1997 1,572 women travelled from Northern Ireland to England and Wales for an abortion. While there has been adverse comment in recent years on the state of the present law, there is also strong public opposition to any change in the law. The Government wishes to take a considered view before any decision on further action is taken.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Department of Health (DoH) has maintained its funding for the voluntary organisation FORWARD - the Foundation for Women's Health Development, which works to educate the relevant communities and professionals concerned with FGM. They also work to raise professional awareness. There are a number of centres involved in counselling women who have undergone the procedure and in performing reconstructive surgery.

DoH have seconded an official to FORWARD for a minimum of two years to work as National Liaison Officer on FGM. This will include local authority liaison with the objective of identifying the key elements of a 'best practice' model to co-ordinate local authority health, education, social services and child protection activities in the area of FGM prevention.

Further funding has also been secured for a Health Promotion Officer. This role will be to liaise with ethnic communities to produce health education literature in a range of relevant languages and to produce a training pack on FGM for health and education professionals.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is deeply steeped in the culture and tradition of those ethnic communities who perform it. It is the responsibility of the police to decide whether there are sufficient grounds for criminal charges to be brought in such cases and for the Crown Prosecution Service to review the case and decide whether it should proceed to court.

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM/HEART DISEASE

Diseases of the Circulatory System

These diseases are the main causes of mortality among women in Britain, accounting for over a third (35%) of all deaths in 1994. They are also the second most important cause of premature death after cancer.

Women appear to be affected differently from men: they develop these diseases at a later age, and they tend to have more strokes while men have more heart attacks. Mortality rates from heart disease are much higher among older women. There are also geographical variations: the lowest rates are in South East England and the highest in Scotland and Northern England.

Overall, men are about 32% more likely to die of coronary heart disease (CHD) than women. 15% of all female deaths are due to strokes compared with 9% of all male deaths.

National Service Framework

The National Service Frameworks are the next step in a wide ranging programme of action set out in *The New NHS* White Paper and *Our Healthier Nation* public health Green Paper to improve the health of the people wherever they live. Coronary heart disease has been chosen as the first National Service Framework. The choice of coronary heart disease was informed by the criteria identified in the Health Service Circular: it is demonstrably relevant to the Government's agenda and covers important health issues in terms of mortality, morbidity, disability or resource use and is an area of public concern.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) is a key area of *Our Healthier Nation*, and the National Service Framework will inform the NHS elements of the national contracts which the Green Paper foreshadows. Within coronary heart disease, the focus will be on the role of the NHS working directly and in partnership with others, especially local authorities, and will include significant elements of health promotion and disease prevention.

In order to enable implementation, the national standards will be underpinned by a clear statement of the evidence base. This will draw on existing research, and may require further work to be commissioned. Findings will be disseminated, for example through the clinical guidelines and clinical audit methodologies which the National Institute of Clinical Excellence will provide. Implementation will be further supported through workforce strategies, information development and organisational development.

The National Service Frameworks will include performance measures against which progress will be assessed - for example, through the NHS performance management framework; through the programme of systematic service reviews which the DoH propose will be undertaken by the Commission for Health Improvement; and through the new NHS Charter.

Heart Disease

Despite the severity of the problem, data about CHD in women is generally insufficient as most studies have been carried out on men. The problem seems to be exacerbated by a lack of awareness among women themselves, GPs and other healthcare workers, some of whom may still retain the stereotypical image of CHD as a predominantly male problem.

It has been recommended that there should be further investigation into claims that women more often have unrecognised symptoms, different symptoms, and different survival rates from men. It has been shown that once women have developed CHD, they tend to be less likely to receive appropriate treatment. There is also some evidence of ignorance throughout the EC countries amongst women as to the main risk factors for heart disease.

Cerebro-Vascular Disease (CVD, or Stroke)

The main risk factor for CVD is high blood pressure. The risk of CVD for women increases with age, chiefly because of increased rates of high blood pressure among older women. There is some evidence, however, that the gap in mortality and morbidity between men and women are closing; one possible cause may be that comparatively more men are giving up smoking.

British Regional Heart Study

This study has been following a cohort of men age 40-59 for 15 years and examining incidence of ischaemic heart disease, hypertension and stroke. It was extended to include women from October 1998 for a three year period at a cost of £0.5 million. The current cohort of 7735 men is drawn from the patients of one GP practice in each of 24 'representative' towns (population 50-100,000) around the country. Key elements of the study are:

- follow up is done through the GP practice so medical details are known to be up to date and accurate;
- details of tests such as ECGs are available, analysis of fasting blood samples can be included (necessary for analysis of Low Density Lipo Protein (LDL) fraction);
- female cohorts will be drawn from same practices so some comparisons can be made with the history and treatment of the male cohort (this might require some additional work on at least part of the male cohort); and
- results from the new study will be available in 2001/2.

The Department of Health is also funding several other research projects which are studying how coronary heart disease affects women.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and thromboembolism

There is some evidence that HRT can increase slightly the risk of thromboembolism. A history of previous thromboembolic problems should therefore be taken into account when considering the prescription or the commencement of HRT. Essentially, analysis of a number of small trials has shown that, with short term use, hormone replacement therapy does not show any cardioprotective effect. In fact the odds ratio calculated suggest there might possibly be a higher incidence of cardiovascular episodes particularly if thromboembolic episodes are included.

However, a major long term follow up study of women on post-menopausal HRT showed a 40% reduction in CHD risk over more than 10 years. At this point overall mortality between the two groups began to converge as the incidence of breast cancer increased in the treated group.

Cardiac rehabilitation

Studies have shown that there are in some parts of the country, inequalities of access to cardiac services. The Clinical Services Advisory Group Report showed evidence of the 'Inverse Care Law' for access to cardiac revascularisation as a result of geographical distance from a cardiac centre. This means, for instance, that although morbidity (for men and women) tended to be higher in the north of England and in Scotland, revascularisation rates tended to be higher in the south, where there is a larger concentration of specialist cardiac centres. In summary, the 'Inverse Care Law' means that the more people need a high quality of treatment or care, the less likely they are to receive it. Inequalities by social class and ethnic origin were also identified.

Ministers are determined to tackle such inequalities, and are looking carefully at access to cardiac services in general, including cardiac rehabilitation. The Department of Health has asked that the patchy provision of cardiac rehabilitation be addressed by those who commission services.

Historically, rehabilitation programmes were designed to get people back to work after Acute Myocardial Infarction (AMI) or surgery. The original target population was men of working age and only once the benefits had been demonstrated was it felt appropriate to extend those benefits to all cardiac patients. The target population now is all people who have had cardiac problems, whether an AMI, heart failure or a cardiac operation.

SMOKING

Smoking remains the greatest single cause of preventable illness and premature death. It is estimated to account for nearly a fifth of all deaths each year - 120,000 in the UK. Smoking is the main cause of lung cancer and is linked to heart disease, chronic bronchitis, asthma and cancers of the mouth, bladder, kidney, stomach and pancreas.

In 1996 29% of men and 28% of women smoked compared with 51% and 41% respectively in 1974. Men and women aged 20-24 (43% and 36% respectively) were more likely than any other age group to smoke cigarettes.

Throughout the 1990s, girls have been more likely to smoke than have boys. In 1996 28% of boys aged 15 and 33% of girls aged 15 smoked regularly and these figures are rising. Between 1994 and 1996, the prevalence of smoking among young women aged 16-24 rose from 28% to 33%. This is a matter of serious concern, particularly in the light of the effect of the prevalence of smoking during pregnancy and the fact that many pregnancies are among women from this age group. The effects of maternal smoking on the foetus are well-documented and include an increased risk of foetal and neonatal mortality, placental abnormalities and lower birthweight. Mothers who smoke increase the risk of cot deaths to their babies. Some smokers do live long lives, but the odds are still heavily stacked against smokers.

12.2 Prevalence of regular cigarette smoking among pupils aged 11 to 15 by age and sex, in England between 1992-1996

	1992	1994	1996
Boys	9%	10%	11%
Girls	10%	13%	15%
All Pupils	10%	12%	13%

Source : Smoking among secondary school children 1996, ONS

12.3 Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex and age: persons aged 16 and over, in Great Britain between 1992-1996

	1992	1994	1996

Men	29%	28%	29%
Women	28%	26%	28%
All aged 16 and over	28%	27%	28%

Source : Living in Britain - General Household Survey 1996

In June 1998 the European Union Council of Ministers formally adopted the Directive to ban tobacco advertising and sponsorship which was voted through the Parliament of the European Union in May. The Directive will ban advertising on posters and in magazines; promotional activities; free distribution of tobacco products; and indirect advertising. Details of the implementation of the tobacco advertising Directive in UK law was a central part of the White Paper *Smoking Kills* published in December 1998.

The White Paper *Smoking Kills* aims to:

- reduce numbers of people who smoke;
- protect the health of both smokers and non-smokers;
- reduce health inequalities; and
- teenage girls and pregnant women will be particular target groups of the measures to be set out in the White Paper.

To achieve those aims there will be:

1. action to protect children and young people:

    - legislation in 1998/99 parliament to end tobacco adverting on billboards;
    - minimal tobacco advertising to be allowed in shops;
    - under-age sales clampdown;
    - proposals for a proof of age card for young smokers; and
    - cigarette machines sited so as not to attract children.

2. an NHS smoking cessation programme:

    - GPs referrals of would-be non-smokers to counselling;
    - discretionary, free, one week's nicotine replacement therapy; and
    - pregnant women a priority.

3. nationwide campaign:

    - £50million anti-smoking campaign.

4. a "clean air" charter:

    - smoking and non-smoking areas in pubs and restaurants;
    - national targets for smoke-free zones in public places;
    - scheme to "badge" bars and restaurants with smoke-free zones; and
    - Health and Safety Commission to consult in Spring 1999 on protecting employees from smoke at work.

12.4 Prevalence of cigarette smoking by sex and socio-economic group : persons aged 16 and over, in Great Britain between 1992-1996

	1992	1994	1996
MEN			
Professional	14%	16%	12%
Employers & Managers	23%	20%	20%
Intermediate and junior non-manual	25%	24%	24%
Skilled manual	34%	33%	32%
Semi-skilled manual	39%	38%	41%
Unskilled manual	42%	40%	41%
All aged 16 and over	**29%**	**28%**	**29%**
WOMEN			
Professional	13%	12%	11%
Employers & Managers	21%	20%	18%
Intermediate & junior non-manual	27%	23%	28%
Skilled manual	31%	29%	30%
Semi-skilled manual	35%	32%	36%
Unskilled manual	35%	34%	36%
All aged 16 and over	**28%**	**26%**	**28%**

Source : Living in Britain - General Household Survey 1996

The Government spends approximately £6.5 million on various campaigns to raise awareness of the health risks and provide support to people who want to give up smoking.

CANCER

Breast cancer and screening

Breast cancer is the single most common cancer in women in the UK, and accounts for the death of 14,000 women each year. The latest data collated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests that for women of all ages, the UK has highest death rate from breast cancer among EU countries. For women under 65 the UK has the fourth highest rate. However, since 1989 UK rates have been falling at a faster rate than the EU average.

The UK was the first country within the European Union, and one of the first in the world, to launch a nation-wide breast cancer screening programme based on computerised call and recall. The programme began in 1988 based on the recommendations of the Forrest Report on breast cancer screening. It invites women aged 50-64 for breast screening by mammography every three years. All women should receive five invitations between the ages of 50 and 64. Women aged 65 or over are entitled to free, three-yearly screening on request.

As at March 1997, 66% of women aged 50 - 64 resident in England had been screened at least once in the previous three years but coverage ranged from 55% in North Thames Region to 71% in Anglia and Oxford Region.

In 1996/7 75% of women aged 50 - 64 invited for screening were screened and 1.1 million women of all ages were screened by mammography. Just over 6,000 cancers were detected. In the light of evidence of higher cancer detection, since 1995 all women have had a second mammographic view of the breast taken on their first visit to the screening programme to increase the likelihood of detecting an abnormality.

Research is under way to assess a number of possible ways in which the breast screening programme might be extended so that women might be offered an even better service. This includes, for example, routinely inviting older women for screening, taking two mammographic views of the breast at each screen, increasing the frequency of screening, and inviting younger women for screening.

In May 1997 the new Government made available an extra £10 million for breast cancer treatment to help speed access to diagnosis and reduce waiting times for treatment by a specialist breast cancer team. The NHS White Paper guarantees that by April 1999 everyone with suspected breast cancer will be able to see a specialist within two weeks of their GP deciding they need to be seen urgently, and requesting an appointment.

In 1997, problems came to light with the breast screening service at Exeter and other parts of the country, which highlighted the vital importance of quality assurance in the NHS. The Government has acted swiftly to rectify shortcomings in breast screening through an overhaul of cancer screening to strengthen quality assurance, and to eliminate weaknesses in the organisation and management of screening.

Cervical cancer and screening

The number of women dying from cervical cancer in England and Wales has fallen from 1,369 in 1994 to 1,222 in 1997, a drop of around 11%. The NHS Cervical Screening Programme was first established as a national programme in 1988. It aims to reduce the number of women who develop invasive cervical cancer and the number of women who die from it each year.

The Programme invites women aged 20-64 for screening at least once every five years. Around 3.5 million are invited for screening each year. In 1996/97, 3.8 million women were screened; around 4.4 million smears were taken, mostly by general practitioners, and examined by pathology laboratories. The financial costs of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme are estimated to be around £132 million a year (around £34 per woman screened).

Eighty five percent of eligible women have been screened in the last five years which exceeds the programme's target of 80% coverage since 1992. The take up, however, varies around the country. Most health authorities and general practices are monitoring their performance and taking steps to improve coverage such as through targeting and making services more accessible to women.

A small number of laboratories have identified serious quality failings in smear screening and reporting, with some women being given inaccurate smear results, leading to consequential illnesses and deaths. In response the Government set up a wide ranging programme of action to improve the overall quality of the service. Regional Directors of Public Health, in association with Health Authorities and NHS Trusts, were required to review their cervical screening activities and agree action plans to ensure all national standards are met, and strengthen quality assurance and the performance of laboratories.

In addition, the Government set up a Cervical Screening Action Team, under the chairmanship of the Chief Medical Officer. Their report, published in August 1998, noted the progress that had been made in improving the quality of the programme. They were, however, concerned about the high level of misunderstanding amongst women and the general public about the nature and limitations of cervical screening. The Team identified key messages that needed to be more widely and clearly disseminated to the general public, to women undergoing screening and to health professionals.

The Government is committed to a high quality service in the cervical screening programme. A report by the National Audit Office *The Performance of the Cervical Screening Programme in England and Wales*, published in April 1998 recognised the improvements that had been made to the programme since 1992, but recognised that not all laboratories were yet meeting achievable performance standards and identified weakness in colposcopy, particularly waiting times and lack of information. Work is in hand to address these issues.

MENTAL HEALTH

In 1993/94 the Department of Health undertook with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS), a national survey of psychiatric morbidity among adults aged 16-64. This survey of 10,000 adults is the largest ever undertaken in Great Britain. Between the ages of 20 and 54 about 22% of women compared with 12% of men were found to have had a neurotic mental health problem. Other studies indicate that the depression rate is twice as high in women as in men, and women are much more likely than men to suffer from eating disorders in a ratio of approximately 10:1. However, women were three times less likely to have alcohol dependence and half as likely to be drug dependent than men. The greater life expectancy for women means that they are more likely to suffer from dementia than men.

The rate of suicide is much lower in women than in men by a factor of 4:1, but rates of deliberate self harm are higher overall. There seem to be some specific periods in their lives when both men and women are exposed to stressful events and circumstances which increase the risk of suicide. Studies have shown that high suicide rates occur among young married Asian women, though they were less likely to have personality disorders or psychiatric disorders when harming themselves. A study completed in 1996 reported that the rates of attempted suicide were 7 times higher in young Asian women (16-19 years) than in young Asian men. Asian women were also much more likely to repeat their attempt than were white women. There was no increased incidence of psychiatric illness in this group and attempts were felt likely to be impulsive.

Women also experience some specific mental health problems. Pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) is a disorder which remains controversial, both in terms of prevalence (rates of 20% - 25% reported), aetiology, diagnosis and treatment. It is recognised that some psychiatric disorders, particularly depression, can be exacerbated in the pre-menstrual phase. Childbirth is also a significant precipitant of psychiatric disorder amongst women. Some 10% - 15% of women experience post natal depression. Hormonal factors have been suggested as an underlying cause, but there is no present consensus on the issue.

Women's experiences of mental health services also differ slightly from those of men. The number of women admitted to psychiatric specialities has increased at a slower rate than the number of men so that by 1995-96, about 52% of admissions were female compared with 55% in 1989 - 90. Rates per 1,000 population are higher for men than women in most age groups, the exception is 45 to 64 years and 65 to 74 years, but the overall rate is slightly higher for women (4.4 per 1,000) than men (4.2 per 1,000); this is a function of the higher number of women in older age groups.

Mental illness is a key area under the *Our Healthier Nation* initiative; the objective is to reduce the overall suicide rate by at least 17% by the year 2010. The initiative also aims to reduce inequalities in health, which should lead to an overall improvement in women's mental health.

A number of activities are taking place to improve diagnosis and treatment in primary care including a national audit, *GP education about mental health in primary care.*

Voluntary organisations can play a valuable role in the provision of services, particularly counselling and advice to women with mental health problems, and in highlighting women's particular concerns to purchasing authorities. Each year the DOH gives grant aid to voluntary organisations concerned specifically with the mental health of women. This is to support both specific campaigns and special projects.

ALCOHOL & DRUGS

Alcohol

Women are less likely to drink excessively than men. However, figures from 1984 indicate that the proportion of women consuming more than 14 units per week has steadily risen from 9% in 1984 to 14% in 1996, in comparison with 27% of men who drink excessively. A higher proportion of women in socio-economic groups 1 and 2 drink above the sensible levels compared to other socio-economic groups.

The Government continues to provide funding for a national alcohol helpline, which provides information, advice and support for those who are worried about their drinking or about someone else's drinking. Information about callers has suggested that this service may be of particular value to women. The Government also funds, via the Health Education Authority, the publication of materials which promote the sensible drinking message and produces a booklet offering advice for those caring for someone with an alcohol problem.

Drugs

The Department of Health (DoH) encourages the establishment of locally based services for drug misusers, providing a range of services from detoxification and counselling to after care and rehabilitation. Latest available data (Drug Misuse Statistics for six months ending March 1997) showed that of the number of individual users presenting to agencies (25,925) a third were women.

In August 1997, the DoH issued Guidance for Health Authorities and Social Services departments on *Purchasing Effective Treatment and Care for Drug Misusers*. This recognised that women with young children may be concerned about seeking help for drug problems because of accessibility issues and fears that their children may be taken into care.

The new 10 year drugs strategy *Tackling drugs to build a better Britain* which was published in April 1998 aims to,

" ensure all problem misusers - irrespective of age, gender, race and drug with which they have a problem - have proper access to support from appropriate services - including primary care - when needed, providing specific support services for young people, ethnic minorities, women and their babies."

The guidance notes provided with the strategy recognise that women who misuse drugs are more likely than men to have been abused, to live in poor circumstances and to have poor social support. Women who misuse drugs and present for treatment have higher rates of unemployment, fewer financial resources and qualifications and fewer job skills than their male counterparts. The strategy also recognises that women with children may be concerned about seeking help for drug problems, yet community services are well placed to meet the needs of women as they are easily accessible and often in touch with health services, particularly during pregnancy. There are therefore opportunities to identify those women most at risk and to intervene early. The guidance advises that making the most of these opportunities may primarily involve working with other appropriate services such as child and adolescent mental health services and producing published policy statements on the confidentiality standards of which drug misusing parents can be assured.

The UK Anti-Drugs Co-ordinator, working from the heart of Government at the Cabinet Office, will be monitoring the implementation and development of the new drugs strategy.

HIV/AIDS

In 1997 there were 1,300 AIDS cases in the UK but incidences are low compared with some other European countries. In 1997 France had nearly twice as many AIDS cases as the UK, Italy over twice as many and Spain four times as many. The number of women diagnosed as HIV infected in the UK has increased nearly every year between 1990 and 1997 although the number remains relatively small. In 1997, 22% of reported HIV infections and 18% of AIDS cases were in women.

12.5 Reports of AIDS cases 1994-1997: age 16 or over at diagnosis

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1994	1533	183	1716
1995	1313	212	1525
1996	1553	266	1819
1997	1082	245	1327

Source: Public Health Laboratory Service

12.6 Reports of HIV diagnoses 1994-1997: age 16 or over at diagnosis

YEAR	MALE	FEMALE	SEX NOT KNOWN	TOTAL
1994	1868	435	1	2304
1995	2072	522	-	2594
1996	2231	563	5	2799
1997	1952	553	11	2516

Source: Public Health Laboratory Service

The incidence of AIDS cases has declined since the introduction of the new combination therapy which is lengthening the time from infection to an AIDS diagnosis and death. The number of reports of AIDS cases fell 8% in 1997 from the previous year but reports of male cases showed a fall of over 30%. This difference between the sexes is probably largely due to the fact that heterosexual infections are often not diagnosed until AIDS develops and thus patients do not have the opportunity to benefit from the new therapies.

Heterosexual men and women are less likely than homosexual men to seek testing and comparing surveillance data from unlinked anonymous surveys and other sources has shown that over 75% of infections in pregnant women are not clinically recognised during pregnancy. This is of particular concern because interventions to reduce the risk of transmission of HIV from mother to baby rely on infection being detected before birth. Mother to child transmission is now the main infection route for children in the UK and about 50 HIV infected babies are born each year. Most of these births are in Greater London and in the Black African ethnic group, reflecting the influence of the sub-Saharan epidemic in the UK. The Government is committed to reducing the number of children born in the UK with HIV infection and a number of initiatives are under way to improve uptake of ante-natal HIV testing in high prevalence areas. For example the Department of Health has produced a leaflet for pregnant women to help them reach an informed decision on HIV testing which has been distributed to all ante-natal clinics in Greater London along with an information leaflet for midwives.

The Government has committed £500,000 over the two years, 1997/98 and 1998/99, to develop new national HIV/AIDS health promotion for African communities in England. This work will cover primary and secondary prevention issues, and will address the needs of men, women and young people. Some African community groups have already been funded to undertake a range of short-term projects, but the bulk of the money has been devoted to developing a more strategic approach to the work. The first outputs from the strategic work will be launched in early 1999, and will include targeted media work and resources aimed at African communities.

Some NHS hospitals have set up family clinics for infected women or families with children so that families can receive treatment together.

Sex education, which must include teaching about HIV, AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, is compulsory in all maintained secondary schools. It is discretionary in primary schools.

The UK Health Departments' HIV and AIDS Health Promotion document, *An Evolving Strategy*, published in 1995, highlighted that particular issues arise for women who may have male sexual partners in high risk groups. Vulnerable groups include gay and bisexual men, injecting drug users and men who travel to, or have links with, high risk countries (presently those in sub-Saharan Africa).

An Evolving Strategy stated that, " *further work would need to be done to establish how to reach women who are immediately vulnerable to HIV either because they are from an affected population, or because their partner has put himself at risk*". It was agreed that, "*many women may be better targeted through general sexual health messages addressing their immediate concerns*". Attention is being given to ensuring women are treated equally as regards HIV in Scotland, particularly as in the last 15 years, new HIV infections in women have accounted for a minimum of 20% and in certain years a high of 28% of overall HIV infections.

Ante-natal testing for HIV infection

The Expert Advisory Group on AIDS (EAGA), which advises the UK Health Departments, has given full and careful consideration to ante-natal testing for HIV and the benefit to HIV infected mothers and their babies of early diagnosis. There is a leaflet for mothers giving all the facts about HIV ante-natal testing, based on EAGA advice and produced by the Department of Health after incorporation of comments from an acceptability pilot.

OSTEOPOROSIS

In June 1998 the Government launched an osteoporosis strategy. Osteoporosis is a reduction in bone mass and density leading to increased risk of fracture, back pain, weight loss, and curvature of the spine. It results in about 60,000 hip fractures a year in the UK, 90% of which are in people over 50 and 80% of which are in women. There are also some 40,000 clinically diagnosed fractures a year from osteoporosis. Elderly people who have suffered a low impact fracture, people being treated with cortico-steroids, women who have had an early menopause or hysterectomy and those with a family history of hip fracture are at high risk of osteoporosis.

The Royal College of Physicians, in conjunction with the Royal Colleges of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and of Surgeons, has drawn up clinical guidelines called *Strategies to Prevent and Treat Osteoporosis*. The guidelines are to be published in early 1999. From these a quick reference primary care guide and laminated desk top guide have been developed, summarising the key recommendations from the main report. The quick reference guides have been welcomed by the Royal Colleges of Physicians and of General Practitioners.

The Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Nutrition Policy (COMA) has recently completed its report on nutrition and bone health. The report identified that there are particular groups in our society that do not have a satisfactory vitamin D status. Experts believe it is reasonable to assume that extra vitamin D and calcium will assist in preventing fractures in the frail elderly.

The COMA report has been published, and the Health Education Authority have produced a *Nutrition and Bone Health* factsheet, summarising the recommendations of the report, for members of the public.

In addition a Local Health Action Sheet has been compiled on preventing accidents caused by osteoporosis in line with our target in *Our Healthier Nation* to reduce the rate of accidents. The Action Sheet shows what can be done at national, local and individual level to reduce the number of accidents caused by osteoporosis. The Action Sheet is a source of ideas for Health Authorities to use when planning action against osteoporosis in their area.

SICKLE CELL ANAEMIA

This is a public health issue which particularly affects Afro-Caribbean women more than men. The Department of Health introduced a national haemoglobinopathy card (in three versions) in 1988. Cards are given to people who have been tested by their doctor for sickle cell anaemia and beta-thalassaemia and show the result of the test. One of the recommendations of the Standing Medical Advisory Committee (SMAC) report was that the national haemoglobinopathy card should be improved and that there should be one distinctive patient-held card for all haemoglobinopathies. The Department of Health has set up a working party to review the card, and subsequently went out to consultation on its possible revised content and format. The new card will be launched in the Spring of 1999.

The NHS Health Technology Assessment Programme has funded two reviews of screening for haemoglobinopathies - a systematic review at the Central Middlesex Hospital NHS Trust and a review and economic analysis at the Institute of Child Health. The reports from both, received in 1998, will be considered by the Chief Medical Officer's National Screening Committee.

The Department of Health has funded a number of organisations to undertake projects to improve information to ethnic minority communities and health professionals. This includes the Sickle Cell Society which has produced a video and booklet for children on sickle cell disease. They provide information about sickle cell anaemia, dispel myths and prejudices, and give children with the disorder the confidence to look after themselves.

The Department of Health is currently considering the possible scope of a national health promotion programme for the haemoglobinopathies to build upon the SMAC report.

The Sickle Cell Society has received grants from the Department of Health, towards its core administrative costs, since 1984. It is currently receiving a three year grant of £28,000pa, and a three year project grant covering the period up to 2001 has been approved towards the cost of a health education/information officer.

WALES

The White Paper - NHS Wales *Putting Patients First* published in January 1998 set out the Government's strategy for NHS in Wales in advance of the establishment of the National Assembly. The Government is anxious to ensure that all patients have fair access to health care services, and that the quality of care provided by the NHS in Wales is of the highest standard. The White Paper proposes a number of initiatives to improve equity of access to services and quality of care, including the development of National Service Frameworks for major diseases and service priorities.

Following the publication of the Public Health Green Paper in May 1998 and tremendous response to the consultation, the *Strategic Framework for Public Health in Wales* was launched in October 1998. The Strategic Framework recognises that all community activity affects, in some way, public health and calls for alliances within local communities to work towards improving health. The document provides a framework for public health development.

Family planning and sexual health

Health Promotion Wales, in conjunction with the Family Planning Association, social and education services and the NHS are drawing up a Sexual Health Strategy for Wales for consultation during 1999. The strategy will include a Wales-wide network of contraceptive and sexual health advisory services which:

- meets the needs of young people;
- ensures that women are aware of post coital contraception;
- ensure that post coital contraception is available to all within 72 hours of incurring risk;
- gives advice about sexually transmitted diseases and treatment;

- provides an agreed common policy framework across health, education and professional organisations; and

- draws on the support of individuals, professional groups and voluntary bodies.

Maternity Services

The policy for Welsh Maternity Services is included in the Protocol for Investment in Health, called *Maternal and Early Child Health* (1991), which identified a range of key targets and emphasised the importance of informed choice and control being available to women. The Protocol has been enhanced in 1998 with the first in a series of *Health Evidence Bulletins*. The purpose of the bulletins is to act as signposts to the best current evidence across a broad range of evidence types and subject areas and represents a systematic summary of the evidence through a formal literature search.

Breast-feeding

A strategy for increasing the initiation and continuance of breast-feeding in Wales is to be developed.

Abortion

12.7 Number of abortions: residents of Wales 1994 to 1997, by type of premises where abortion performed

	1994	1995	1996	1997
NHS	4,575	4,452	4,572	4,254
NHS Agency (a)	218	419	1,606	2,180
Non NHS	1,982	1,571	1,109	954
Total	6,775	6,442	7,287	7,338

Source : Office for National Statistics

(a) These figures represent operations carried out in the agency sector on NHS patients.

Heart Disease

In Wales, heart disease is the most common cause of death for both men and women. However, the death rate for women is 20% less than that for men. Even so, 25% more women report being treated for high blood pressure than men, and only half as many women than men report being treated for heart attack. The implementation of the National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease will influence the totality of care of this condition in the future with its emphasis on prevention, detection, treatment and rehabilitation.

Breast Cancer

Breast Test Wales (BTW) was established in 1988 to undertake the Welsh element of the NHS Breast Screening Programme (NHSBSP). It aims to reduce by 2002, deaths from breast cancer in women invited for screening by 25%. Like the rest of the NHSBSP, BTW invites women between the ages of 50 and 64 to be screened once every 3 years, with those over 64 being screened on request. In 1996-97 (the latest year for which figures are available), BTW screened 61, 934 women with an uptake rate of 78%. A Charter Mark was awarded to BTW in 1995 and re-affirmed in January 1999.

Cervical Cancer Screening

A National Service Framework for the Cervical Screening Programme in Wales is in the process of development for implementation from April 1999. This framework will ensure that all women have access to a high quality service which operates to published national standards and is monitored and outcome evaluated. It also ensures that there is a single point for accountability and performance management.

Mental Health

Most mental disorders are more common amongst women than amongst men though this seems to have more to do with environmental than biological factors. Women, like men, stand to benefit, therefore, from the Government initiatives aimed at establishing a National Service Framework (NSF) for mental health services. It will produce clear information to enable services to be delivered with greater consistency and with higher standards. The mental health strategy running in parallel with the NSF will have the key themes of improving services, improving safety and the involvement of patients, users and carers. The latter category, of course, includes a very high proportion of women.

Hepatitis B Screening

There are plans to roll out universal maternal Hepatitis B screening in Wales by 1 April 1999. A multi-disciplinary group is considering the details of this screening programme and the subsequent neonatal and family follow-up, counselling and immunisation programme. Guidance to Health Authorities on the best practice and an advisory leaflet for women and their families are being drafted.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Recent Health Reforms

The Northern Ireland Regional Strategy *Health and Wellbeing: Into the Next Millennium* was published in 1996 and came into effect from April 1997. It contains detailed objectives and targets which set the direction for the Health and Social Services and others working to improve health and wellbeing over the period 1997-2002. It was accompanied in December 1997 by *Well into 2000* which sets out the Government's vision for improving health and well-being in Northern Ireland. It endorses the detailed objectives and targets set out in the Regional Strategy.

Women's Health Indicators

As in the rest of the UK, life expectancy at birth in Northern Ireland is greater for women than for men, with women expected to live until 79 years. Between 1991 and 1996 the total number of female deaths in Northern Ireland rose slightly by 3% and male deaths fell by almost 2%. The single main cause of death in Northern Ireland is heart disease which accounted for 25% of deaths in 1996 followed by cancers at 24%. Risk factors common to the major diseases are smoking, lack of physical activity and poor nutrition.

Family Planning and Family Planning Issues

It is important that women have access to advice and information on sexual health and contraceptive services. In Northern Ireland in 1997/98 there were around 80,000 visits to family planning clinics.

In Northern Ireland, the *Regional Strategy for Health and Social Well Being 1997* - 2002 recognises the importance of ensuring that women have access to advice and information on sexual health and contraceptive matters. The 1992-97 Strategy targets on reductions in the teenage birth rate were substantially achieved (1,647 births in 1997 against a baseline figure of 1,939): however, births to teenage mothers remain a concern. The current Regional Strategy sets a new target that by 2002 there should be a further fall in unplanned births to mothers aged under 20, with the effect that the overall number of births to teenage mothers is reduced by 10%. Initiatives to achieve this are under way and include support for voluntary sector contraceptive advice and education services for young people and the development of guidance materials for sex education for primary and post primary schools.

Breastfeeding

While the 1995 Infant Feeding Survey shows an encouraging increase in breastfeeding rates in Northern Ireland, rates continue to lag behind the rest of the UK. In December 1997 the Department of Health and Social Services established a Northern Ireland Breastfeeding Strategy Group to address the issue of poor breastfeeding rates in Northern Ireland. The Group acts as a focal point for expertise on the promotion of breastfeeding and to provide a co-ordinating framework to support all those involved in the effort to increase breastfeeding rates in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Regional Strategy contains targets for improvement in breastfeeding rates as follows:

- by 2002 the proportion of women breastfeeding during the first two or three days after birth should be increased to 50%; and
- by 2002 the proportion of women breastfeeding at 6 weeks should be increased to 35%.

Heart Disease

There has been some progress made over the five year period 1991-1996 in reducing the number of premature deaths from heart disease in Northern Ireland. However the position still remains amongst the worst in the world.

Recent initiatives aimed at addressing some of the risk factors which give rise to heart disease include the formation of an inter-agency working group to develop a food and nutrition strategy for Northern Ireland and of an inter-agency Physical Activity Strategy Group to explore how best to encourage physical activity.

Breast Cancer

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women in Northern Ireland, with more than 100 deaths each year in the 50-64 age group. The Regional Strategy includes the target to reduce death from breast cancer in women aged 50-69 by at least 25% by 2002. Overall take up of screening in

Northern Ireland is about 70%; lower than the rate for the UK as a whole (73%) although the latest figures available show that in 1996/97, 71% of women between the ages of 50-64 who were invited for mammography screening accepted the invitation.

In March 1997, the Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency, in conjunction with the four Health and Social Services Boards, ran a major advertising campaign designed to increase the take up of breast screening. Also the Department of Health and Social Services in association with Age Concern ran a publicity campaign aimed at raising awareness among older women of the risks of breast cancer.

Cervical Cancer Screening

The Regional Strategy includes the target to reduce the incidence of invasive cervical cancer by at least 20% in women aged 20 and over. Approximately 40 women die each year in Northern Ireland from cervical cancer. Women aged between 20-65 years are invited for screening every 5 years. Progress towards achieving take up targets are encouraging, with 95% of GPs achieving the low target and 53% the high target in 1996. A Working Group was established in 1996 to review the operation of the Cervical Screening Programme, to consider the need for improvements and to explore how these might be implemented. The Report of the Working Group and new guidance aimed at improving the operation of the programme, were issued in November 1997.

Smoking

Tobacco use is responsible for nearly 3,000 deaths per year in Northern Ireland. Although there has been a fall of nearly one quarter in adult male smoking in the last 20 years, levels of smoking among young women have not fallen in the last 10 years.

The current Regional Strategy identifies children, young people and women as priority groups for action to reduce smoking prevalence. It sets a target that by 2002 the proportion of the adult population aged 16 plus who do not smoke should be increased from 72% to 74% and those aged 11-15 years who do not smoke cigarettes should have increased from 83% to 85%. The target in the 1992-97 Strategy was 75% of the population aged between 12-64 who do not smoke against a baseline of 68% (1988) and the percentage by 1997 was 72%.

In 1996, a report on a 2 year project called *Stopping for Me: Women, Disadvantage and Smoking* was produced. The project, which was run jointly with the Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency and the Women's Resource and Development Agency, found a need for higher levels of focused community development work with women on health issues. A women-centred approach to stopping smoking was tested and the materials used form part of the report, which was distributed to a wide range of local professionals, as well as national and international colleagues. Plans have begun to organise training in the use of the materials.

The Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency is involved in annual campaigns to reduce smoking as part of No Smoking Day.

In 1998 the Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency re-ran parts of its original high profile television advertising campaign on the issue of teenage smoking. The target group was young people (particularly girls) aged between 11 and 14 years. An evaluation of the original campaign in 1996 showed that the advertisements had made a significant impact on the target group.

Alcohol

In Northern Ireland there is a higher degree of abstinence than in the rest of the UK though this is tempered by the proportion of men and women exceeding the recommended sensible limits for alcohol consumption. The 1992-97 Northern Ireland Regional Strategy target was to reduce the proportion of 12-64 year olds exceeding the sensible drinking limits to 25% of males and 7% of females. The figures in 1997 were 21% of males and 7% of females against the 1988 baseline figures of 16% male and 5% female. The current Regional Strategy recognises that numbers of drinkers, particularly young female drinkers, are increasing and requires a review of the regional strategy on alcohol which is currently taking place.

Folic Acid

Northern Ireland has the highest incidence of neural tube defects in the UK. Increasing folic acid/folate before conception and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy reduces the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida, anencephaly and encephalocoele. The Department of Health and Social Services participated in a UK-wide Folic Acid Awareness Campaign in 1996. The Department has also commissioned the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland to conduct a public information campaign to increase awareness and knowledge in relation to folic acid. The campaign started in October 1998.

Publications

The Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services published *Well Women - Over 35 Health Tips* in 1996. This shows some of the simple steps women can take to feel and stay healthy. The Department published *Women's Health Matters* in 1993. 75,000 copies were distributed initially and it continues to be available.

In 1997, the Health Promotions Agency for Northern Ireland published and distributed 100,000 copies of a new edition of the leaflet *While you are Pregnant*.

SCOTLAND

In February 1998, the Government published its Green *Paper Working Together for a Healthier Scotland*. This set out proposals for a co-ordinated inter-sectoral approach to health improvement which focuses not only on tackling the life circumstances such as unemployment and poverty which contribute to poor health but also on improving lifestyles and addressing priority health topics such as coronary heart disease and strokes, cancer, mental health, accidents and teenage pregnancies. The majority of respondents to the consultation paper endorsed this approach and the responses are informing the preparation of the White Paper is expected to be published early in 1999.

In 1996, *Eating for Health: A Diet Action Plan for Scotland* was published. It makes 71 recommendations for action which everyone with an influence over the Scottish diet - from primary producers and manufacturers of food, through to the NHS, schools, caterers, Government, the media and consumers themselves can voluntarily take to improve diet and thus achieve the dietary targets which have been set for the year 2005. The pivotal role of women in the drive to improve Scotland's diet is highlighted.

The *Scottish Health Survey* 1995 was published in 1997 and provides, for the first time, authoritative and robust baseline data covering key areas of Scotland's health for both men and women in the 16-64 age group and the conditions and lifestyle behaviours which contribute to it. It shows that more women than men have had a cardiovascular disorder diagnosed, and suffer from breathlessness, high blood pressure and obesity. Future Surveys, which will be published every three years, will be used to detect changes in Scotland's health and thus measure the effectiveness of the Government's health policies.

In Scotland, Health Boards assess the needs of their population and provide services in accordance with those needs. This is not specific to women but applies to all sectors of the local population. The Priorities and Planning Guidance for the NHS in Scotland for 1999/2002, which was passed to the health service in August 1998, provides the overall policy context for the planning and delivery of health services and focuses the NHS in Scotland on the most important national priorities. The three clinical priorities for the NHS in Scotland are mental health, coronary heart disease and stroke, and cancer.

Women's health indicators

As is the case with the rest of the UK, the single main cause of death is heart disease, which accounted for over a quarter of deaths in Scotland in 1996. Cancers accounted for about one in four deaths in 1996.

Mortality in Scotland from cancer heart disease and accidents is higher than in the rest of the UK. *Scotland's Health - A Challenge to Us All* identified coronary heart disease and cancer as well as HIV/AIDS, accidents and dental and oral health as priority areas on which action to improve Scotland's health should be focused.

12.8 Selected causes of Death in Scotland by gender in 1992 and 1996

	1992	**1996**	**1992**	**1996**
	% of all female deaths	**% of all female deaths**	**% of all male deaths**	**% of all male deaths**
Coronary Heart disease	30	28	34	32
Stroke	16	14	10	9
Breast Cancer	4	4	---	---
Cervical	1	0.4	---	---

Cancer				
Lung Cancer	5	5	9	8
Malignant Melanoma	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Other skin cancer	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
Accident	2	2.0	3	3
Suicide	0.5	0.5	1	2

Source : Office for National Statistics.

Deaths in Scotland are higher from cancer, heart attacks and accidents. Breast cancer deaths peaked in 1980 at 28.8 per 100,000 and fell to 20.8 per 100,000 in 1996.

Family Planning Services

In Scotland approximately 445,000 women use family planning services each year, 75% through their GP. This figure does not include those who use non-NHS services such as the Brook Advisory Centres. The Scottish Office Department of Health gives grant support to the Family Planning Association, the Natural Family Planning Association and the Brook Advisory Centres.

Working together for a Healthier Scotland recognised that progress in reducing pregnancy rates had been limited and there was a need to review policy. A Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (SNAP) offering guidance about family planning services and advice to be made available to younger people, had been issued in 1995. Views were invited on whether there was a need for a national strategy, possibly built on the basis of SNAP, what elements a national strategy should contain and how it should be developed. Statistics for 1996 indicate that the conception rate in that year was 9.4 per 1000, with an abortion rate of 4.8 per 1000. Analysis by deprivation category showed that the higher the deprivation category the more likely the girl was to continue with the pregnancy.

Breastfeeding

The Diet Action Plan for Scotland, *Eating for Health*, which was published in July 1996, recommended action to address the low level of breastfeeding in Scotland and to stimulate progress towards the breastfeeding target which have been set for the year 2005, that the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies for the first six weeks of life should increase to more than 50% from the present incidence of around 30%. Health Boards were invited to set local targets and to put in place arrangements to monitor these. Most boards have now set targets and Scotland's Chief Medical and Chief Nursing Officers have taken steps to encourage professional support for breastfeeding and to improve professional practice.

In order to advise on and monitor work in this area, the Scottish Office Department of Health set up, in 1995, the Scottish Breastfeeding Group and it also appointed a National Breastfeeding Adviser. The Group, which is chaired by the Department's Chief Nursing Officer, is a multidisciplinary body representing a range of professional and lay organisations with an interest in breastfeeding issues. It provides a focus for breastfeeding at a national level and complements the promotion work being undertaken locally. The National Breastfeeding Adviser's remit is to provide training, advice and support to NHS personnel and lay workers, to act as a facilitator to local breastfeeding initiatives, and to report on progress to the Scottish Breastfeeding Group.

Heart Disease

The current target is for a 40% reduction in the death rate from heart disease in all Scots under the age of 65. In 1998 mortality statistics show that a 28% reduction has been achieved. Whilst this is encouraging, there is still some way to go before the 40% target can be achieved.

Action to tackle the lifestyle behaviours which contribute towards the prevalence of coronary heart disease is being taken forward by the Health Education Board of Scotland in the context of its 'Big 3' (coronary heart disease, cancer and strokes) campaign. It highlights the links between lifestyle and these diseases, and focuses on what people can do themselves to lessen the risks.

Breast Cancer

Each year in Scotland approximately 3,150 women contract breast cancer and nearly 1,250 will die from it. Scottish European Age Standardised Rates (EASR) for mortality from breast cancer peaked in 1980 at 28.8 per 100,000 women under the age of 65 and fell to 20.8 per 100,000 in 1996. The Scottish Breast Screening Programme (SBSP) target is to reduce deaths from breast cancer amongst the screened population by 25% by the year 2000, from 100.2 per 100,000 Women (EASR) to no more than 75.2 per 100,000.

Begun in 1987, the SBSP has been fully operational since June 1991. All women aged 50-64 are invited to mammography screening every three years and women aged 65 and over three yearly on request. In 1996/97, 149,408 women in Scotland were invited for screening. The take up rate was 72%.

Cancer Screening

Mortality from cervical cancer in Scotland is decreasing, with deaths from the disease falling from 188 in 1987 to 138 in 1996. The Scottish Cervical Screening Programme (SCSP) aims to identify and treat abnormal cells before they become cancerous. Most cervical screening is undertaken in general practitioner (GP) surgeries and a system of target payments was introduced in 1990 for GPs who screen women aged 20-60 on their practice lists. Women aged 60 and over continue to be invited to be screened if they have not had 2 clear smears within the previous 10 years.

There has been a 34% reduction in incidence and mortality from cervical cancer since 1986 and the percentage of women attending for cervical screening has risen from 81% in 1994 to 87% in 1997 (20 to 60 age group).

In Scotland, by the end of 1996, over 85% of the target population aged 20-60 were screened in the previous 5. 5 years, compared with 81% by the end of 1994.

Smoking

The current smoking target is for a 30% reduction by the year 2000 in the number of smokers aged 12-24 years, from 30% to 21%, and a 20% reduction amongst those aged 25-64 from 40% to 32%. By 1996, smoking prevalence in the older group was 33.5% - just 1.5% above the target but a rise of 1.5% since 1994. While this target remains attainable there seems virtually no prospect of achieving the 12-24 age group. For this age group, the figures for 1996 showed a prevalence rate of 32.1% which is 2.1% above the baseline year of 1986 and a 4% increase since 1994. There is no statistically significant difference in prevalence rates between men and women in Scotland. The 1996 survey by the Office for National Statistics of Scottish secondary school children (12-15 age group) shows that the prevalence was slightly higher among girls than among boys (23% compared with 22%).

A number of initiatives aimed at women are being established. ASH Scotland, through its *Women, Low Income and Smoking* Project has set up a database of community-based projects and is funding two waves of initiatives. A variety of approaches are being used ranging from health and fitness sessions to magazine production, and peer education projects are being explored involving training local women to run initiatives.

Alcohol

The target for alcohol misuse is to achieve between 1986 and 2000 a reduction of 20% in the proportion of men and women drinking more than 21 and 14 units of alcohol per week respectively. Findings from the 1996 General Household Survey show that 25% of men were exceeding the recommended weekly limits compared with 24% in 1986, while 11% of women were drinking above sensible levels, compared with 7% in 1986. Attainment of the target looks highly unlikely and the increase in the number of women who are exceeding the recommended levels is a particularly worrying trend.

The Scottish Office recognises that concerted action is needed to address this upward trend, in addition to public information campaigns undertaken by Health Education Board Scotland (HEBS) and other interested agencies. The Scottish Office has been considering other ways in which women might be encouraged to examine their drinking habits. One successful initiative to emerge has been a minimal intervention project in Lanarkshire. Initially targeted at women aged 18-45 with family responsibilities, the project used health visitors to assess levels of drinking within a "healthy living" context. The approach was found to be so successful that the scheme was extended to other health professionals with different target groups and similar schemes are to be extended to other areas in Scotland.

Action on women's drinking has also been identified in the Government's Public Health White Paper for Scotland.

Diet

The dietary targets which have been set for the year 2005 seek major increases in the consumption of fruit and vegetables, cereals, rice, pasta and bread, and oil rich fish; and decreases in fat, salt and sugar intake. The Scottish Health Survey 1995 shows that, whilst women eat more fruit and vegetables than men, only 52% of women eat fruit once a day or more and only 30% eat cooked green vegetables once a day or more.

However, these statistics were collected before *Eating for Health : A Diet Action Plan for Scotland* was published in 1996. Since then, much action has taken place at both national and local level in the drive to improve the diet of men and women in Scotland. For example, one of the most important recommendations of the Plan to be implemented so far has been the establishment of the Scottish Community Diet Project to improve the diet of communities in areas of deprivation. The next Scottish Health Survey, scheduled to be published in 2000, will provide essential information on the effectiveness of the action promoted by the Action Plan.

Drugs

In Scotland in 1996/97, over 29% of the 8,470 drug misusers reporting to services for the first time were women. Of these, over half reported heroin as their main drug, in common with men.

Hepatitis B

The National Screening Committee has recommended that all pregnant women should be offered ante-natal screening for hepatitis B. In addition to this, all Health Boards in Scotland are required to ensure that, by April 2000, all babies born to infected mothers receive a complete course of immunisation starting at birth.

The problems facing women who misuse drugs have been recognised in guidance issued in 1997 by the Scottish Office to those planning and providing services, including local Drug Action Teams. They have been advised to be sensitive to the particular needs of women in the provision of services, including in relation to child care facilities, outreach approaches in neutral settings and the need for greater liaison with maternity services for those misusers who are pregnant. They have also been advised to seek the views of women service users.

Osteoporosis

In Scotland osteoporosis comes under the umbrella of services for women commissioned by Health Boards. The Scottish Needs Assessment Programme (SNAP) published a report on osteoporosis in April 1997.

Health and domestic violence

Women who experience domestic violence are recognised as more likely to have poor health, depression, addictions and difficulties in pregnancy and to attempt suicide. A strategic multisectoral approach is, therefore, being developed. At the same time targeted initiatives have been undertaken, for example to increase awareness among health professionals in relation to dealing with women who experience domestic violence and to enhance increased interagency co-ordination of action. The results of such projects are widely disseminated throughout Scotland.

Ethnic Minority Women

The Scottish Office Department of Health issued guidance to the Scottish Health Service in 1994 aimed at encouraging the Service to improve access to health care for ethnic minority communities. Ministers have made their views clear that they expect the NHS in Scotland:

- to examine existing services in relation to minority ethnic communities;
- to use their health improvement programmes to focus on achieving culturally competent services; and
- to ensure services are accessible to ethnic people and take account of cultural and religious sensitivities.

In addition, Ministers have also challenged all parts of the Health Service to:

- live by the spirit and not just the letter of existing legislation;
- integrate ethnic health issues as a part of their mainstream work;
- develop and train staff to deliver culturally competent and appropriate services;
- improve the access and experience of ethnic people in primary care; and
- build partnerships and alliances with voluntary and community groups and with individual service users.

These are in addition to the commitment given in the Patient's Charter that everyone should have access to suitable health care irrespective of special needs, disability or income and everyone should be treated as an individual with consideration being given to their cultural and religious beliefs.

ARTICLE 13

WOMEN IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

> *1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular;*
>
> *a. The right to family benefits;*
>
> *b. The right to bank loans, mortgages and other forms of financial credit;*
>
> *c. The right to participate in recreational activities, sports and all aspects of cultural life.*

Taxes and Family Benefits

The Social Security system of the United Kingdom is described in detail in previous reports and under Article 11. Other relevant information is included under Article 16. The general principle is that women and men have equal access to family benefits.

In addition, changes made to the Additional Personal Allowance, with effect from April 1997 removed an inequity from the tax system, which gave the allowance to men with incapacitated wives and a dependent child, but denied it to wives in the same situation. The allowance is now available to women on the same basis as to men.

Increasing attention has been paid to the issue of who within a family receives family benefits and tax credits/allowances. Most UK benefits and tax allowances are available to either the man or the woman within a couple. However two benefits - Child Benefit and Family Credit - are paid to the woman in families where both parents are present. Recent research has suggested that it may make a difference, in terms of how much benefit the children within households get, whether the benefit is paid to the mother or father.

Budget changes announced in March 1998 were aimed at providing more support to families with children. Child Benefit (see Article 11) paid for the eldest child in a family has been increased by £2.50 a week, over and above increases to take account of inflation. This measure alone has increased the amount of money paid mainly to women, by £875 million per annum. However, the Government believes that the best route out of poverty for families with children is work. The introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), which will replace Family Credit from October 1999, will increase the level of support given to low and middle income families, increasing the incentive to move from welfare into work and providing more support for families with children on low income. Either member of a couple who qualify for the payment will be entitled to claim the WFTC. Given that nearly 50% of recipients will be lone parents (the majority of whom are women), it will mean that in-work incomes for many women will be higher whilst receiving the WFTC than they would be receiving on Family Credit. In addition, the childcare tax credit element of the WFTC will give much more help with childcare costs to families on low to middle incomes, enabling them to balance work and family commitments better. This will be of particular benefit to women who want to work, but who find it difficult to afford quality childcare.

From July 1998, new lone mothers began receiving the same rate of Child Benefit for their only or eldest child as a mother with a partner. However, lone parents who were claiming from before this date will continue to receive payment of Child Benefit (Lone Parent) for as long as they satisfy the conditions for being a lone parent. Lone parents who stop claiming Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance to take up employment, will retain any entitlement to Family Premium (Lone Parent) should they return to benefit within twelve weeks.

Lone parents who were getting Income Support or Jobseekers Allowance since before 6 April 1998 but were not claiming Child Benefit (Lone Parent), may be able to get the higher rate of Child Benefit on starting work. For further details see Section on 'Benefits for Mothers' under Article 11.

Finance, Mortgages and Credit

Current accounts were the most commonly held form of bank account for both women and men in Great Britain in 1996-7, although men were more likely than women to hold such an account either in their own name or in joint names (86% and 82% respectively). Women are more likely than men to have other types of bank account, such as a deposit account in their own name.

Overall, more men than women in Great Britain hold any form of plastic card. In 1996, 37% of women and 46% of men hold a credit or charge card. Women are more likely to have a retailer card; these are held by almost three in ten women but only one in five men.

The proportion of new mortgages taken out by women in their own name in the UK doubled to 16% between 1983 and 1997. This rise may be explained by more women entering the labour market and the increased independence that this brings, as well as the rising age at marriage and the higher levels of divorce. Over the same period, the proportion of new mortgages taken out by a man, solely in his name, increased by a third, while the proportion of new mortgages taken out in joint names by one man and one women declined from 73% to 57%.

Financial Credit for Women in Business

Women entrepreneurs make an increasingly important contribution to the business sector. 30% of new businesses started each year are run by women and 7% of women in work are self-employed. Research has shown that women face some difficulties when starting a business in line with those faced by men. The added problems are affordable childcare, access to finance and being treated seriously by others such as potential clients/customers.

Women may face more difficulty in raising finance to start a business due to lack of security or a track record. They may be assisted by the Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme under which viable businesses that lack security are helped to obtain debt finance.

Sport

According to the 1996 General Household Survey, men are more likely than women to have participated in at least one sporting activity - 71% of men but only 58% of women. This represents a small increase in women's participation since 1987. These participation levels are similar to those from the previous survey in 1993.

There has been a general growth in the UK of participation in keep fit activities, particularly amongst women. Although outdoor team games are still male dominated, the numbers of women taking part in team sports, such as football and cricket, are also increasing.

13.1 Top six sports for women in selected age bands in Great Britain in 1996: rank order for the percentage of women participating in the four weeks before interview.

Age 16-19	Age 25-29	Age 45-49	Age 70+
Walking	Walking	Walking	Walking
Keep fit/Yoga	Keep fit/Yoga	Keep fit/Yoga	Keep fit/Yoga
Snooker/Pool	Swimming	Swimming	Swimming
Swimming	Cycling	Cycling	Bowls
Cycling	Snooker/Pool	Weight Training	Cycling
Tenpin Bowls	Weight Training	Golf	Golf

Source: 1996 General Household Survey, Office for National Statistics

Both the Government and the Sports Councils are committed to ensuring women's representation on committees and in senior and middle management, and to increasing women's influence in national sporting organisations. For example, the English Sports Council (ESC) established a Working Group on Women and Sport in January 1997, to advise them on ensuring that its wider policies do not discriminate against women. All Sports Council awards to sports governing bodies and other organisations are made on the condition that they have equal opportunity policies for women.

Sport will receive 16.66% of the net proceeds of the National Lottery, which will be distributed by the ESC. This money, which will be additional to conventional public expenditure, will benefit all groups throughout England. Applicants to the Lottery Sports Fund are required to demonstrate ways of encouraging the participation of women when applying for funding. Organisations which have not been able to do so satisfactorily have been refused funding. This is making a real difference to the approach that sports clubs have towards women, including issues such as membership and participation. This was shown in the recent vote by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) to admit women, which has removed that barrier to the MCC receiving money from the Lottery Sports Fund.

The Government is also committed to providing physical education and sport for all school pupils regardless of their ability, gender, religion or cultural ethnic background. Physical education, which includes sport, games and other physical activities, is one of ten foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and is compulsory for all pupils aged 5-16. In school, pupils are expected to be treated as individuals and should be taught physical education and sport in ways appropriate to their own particular needs and abilities. It is for school governors and head-teachers to ensure that equal access and opportunities in physical education and sport are provided to all pupils.

In May 1998, the Government adopted the 1994 Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport. The Declaration followed on from the first international conference on women and sport held in Brighton in May 1994. The conference was organised by the Great Britain Sports Council, was supported by the British Olympic Committee, and brought together policy and decision makers in sport at both national and international level. The Declaration provides the principles that should guide action intended to increase the involvement of women in sport at all levels.

Travel and crime and fear of crime on public transport

Although men and women make a similar number of journeys overall, they make them for different purposes, which reflect their different lifestyles at different ages. For example, adult women are much more likely to accompany children to school and to make shopping trips than men. There are also differences in the distance travelled, particularly for car driver trips, with men travelling 45% further on average than women. Women also make more trips on foot and via public transport, reflecting the gender differences in driver licence holding.

Women's participation in recreational and cultural activities depends in part on their ability to use the public transport system. Levels of fear are high on public transport, despite low levels of recorded crime. In a 1997 survey on perceptions of safety from crime on public transport, conducted by the former Department of Transport, women reported higher levels of fear than men. Women tend to fear a lone encounter by a man while men fear groups or gangs of other men. Black and ethnic minorities express significantly higher levels of fear than white people. Of the white population, 16% of men and 38% of women said that they use public transport but have some fears. The figures in the black and ethnic minority communities were 28% and 45% respectively.

One of the major priorities in the Government's White Paper, *The Future of Transport* is the reduction of crime and the fear of crime wherever it occurs in the transport system. The White Paper recognises that women's transport needs are often different from those of men, and that improving public transport and encouraging safe, integrated transport systems (particularly local interchanges) are the key to giving women the transport they need.

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions has developed a number of initiatives to reduce crime and fear of crime on public transport. While these measures will benefit both women and men they will particularly benefit women:

- in 1995, establishing the Women's Transport Network which aims to promote transport systems and pedestrian environments that are safe and accessible for all, and to encourage women to enter and progress in the transport industry;

- in 1996, publishing and distributing good practice guidelines for transport operators, local authorities and others to reduce crime;

- encouraging a multi-agency approach between the transport operators, the British Transport Police, local authorities and other interested groups;

- developing and launching a Secure Stations Scheme in 1998 to improve and standardise good security practices at all overground and underground stations policed by the British Transport police. As part of securing an award, station operators have to ask their customers (with a specified percentage of women) whether they feel safe;

- commissioning research in 1998 on personal security in the pedestrian environment, and on the relationship between young people and transport crime which will specifically examine gender differences;

- developing a gender audit during 1998/99 to be used by central and local government transport planners to provide transport that women want; and

- this work will also feed into the Women's Unit's programme of work on violence against women. (see Article 16)

The Environment

The UK increasingly progresses its environment policy as part of the broader concept of sustainable development which involves achieving environmental, economic and social objectives simultaneously, so that environmental considerations are integrated into all areas of policy (including transport, energy and agriculture) rather than being considered in isolation. This approach together with parallel initiatives to further environmentally friendly Government operations such as procurement, energy and water efficiency, green transport - is promoted by a network of 'green' Ministers in each Department and is subject to scrutiny by Parliament's new Environmental Audit Committee.

The UK produced its first national sustainable development strategy in 1994, and a set of sustainable development indicators in 1996. The Government is reviewing both of these following wide public consultation to reflect the changes that have taken place since 1994 and its distinctive approach to sustainable development. It aims to publish a revised strategy, including indicators and targets, in early 1999.

At the local level sustainable development is taken forward by local authorities through the Local Agenda 21 initiative. A recent survey suggests that 87% of local authorities have taken up the Prime Minister's challenge at the UN Special Assembly on the Environment in New York in June 1997, that all local authorities should have adopted a Local Agenda 21 strategy by the year 2000. Central and local Government are working together to ensure that the remaining

13% of local authorities also adopt an effective strategy, in line with the Government's local democratic renewal programme.

The Government recognises the positive role that women have to play in environmental decision-making - as well as elsewhere - and seeks to integrate specific gender needs in the planning of settlements, buildings, transport infrastructure and services (e.g. in terms of personal safety and access to affordable housing) and to ensure that women understand and contribute to the issues involved in sustainable development. For instance, the Government continues to consult women's groups on a range of environmental policies, such as the new Integrated Transport Policy published in July 1998, and considers women's particular concerns about transport safety and access.

Women's groups are well represented on Government advisory bodies such as the UK Round Table on Sustainable Development, the National Consumer Council and the Local Agenda 21 Steering Group, but the Government continues to look to improve its performance in involving women in all aspects of environmental decision-making.

SCOTLAND

Women in Business

In Scotland, the Government's main economic development agency - Scottish Enterprise - launched an action plan in 1994 aimed at increasing the number of women starting a business.

A broad range of initiatives has since been introduced to provide advice, assistance and training for women starting a business or considering doing so. Examples include various Training and Development programmes; Women's Business Clubs into Business Programme; coaching seminars; Microcredit programme; Women's Enterprise Centre; Women's Business Directory; Women's Technology Centre.

Scotland's other development agency, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, also attaches a high priority to helping women into business. The agency assisted the creation of 236 new small businesses within its area in 1997-98, with 48% run by women.

Transport

An integrated transport policy for Scotland is being implemented. These measures were set out in the White Paper *Travel Choices for Scotland*. Its aim is to develop an effective, sustainable and integrated transport system appropriate to the needs of the people, economy and environment of Scotland. It will provide effective transport alternatives to the car wherever practical. Specific attention will be given to addressing the particular transport needs of women. For example, women in rural areas are particularly disadvantaged because of lack of public transport. Elderly and mobility impaired women and mothers with children will also benefit from improvements in public transport services and increased personal security.

Consultative draft national planning policy guidance on transport was published in August 1998 and it is planned to publish guidance on local transport strategies in February 1999.

The Arts

The Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen (formerly the Scottish Film Council) have continued to pursue effective equal opportunities policies and award grants on an equal basis. For example, of 54 writers who have recently been awarded Scottish Arts Council funding, 22 were women.

Recent research has confirmed earlier work indicating that in general women have a higher level of involvement in the arts than men, both as spectators and participants. This is particularly true for theatre and the visual arts.

NORTHERN IRELAND

In Northern Ireland, a wide range of projects representing women's groups and interests continue to be funded through the Belfast Regeneration Office, the Londonderry Initiative Strategy and the Regional Development Office. The projects or groups funded are in support of self-help, education, cultural and economic development of women in Northern Ireland. The types of areas addressed include: health needs of women; domestic violence; women returning to work; training and education needs; cross-community projects; self-employment; and childcare and playgroup training.

Sport in Northern Ireland

In 1996, the Sports Council for Northern Ireland (SCNI) launched a *Women in Sport* Policy Directive. This Directive, which adopted the Brighton Declaration, highlighted the need to provide better opportunities for women to become involved in sporting activities. Following the adoption of this Directive, most of the work aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for girls has focused on the formal education sector and the leisure industry.

As a consequence of the growing interest among girls in sports which have traditionally been male dominated, SCNI are now working with the governing bodies of sports to ensure that their practices and procedures are fair and equitable. Directions under the National Lottery Act 1993 have become increasingly important in placing demands on voluntary sport to modify discriminatory practices. It is the intention of the SCNI to introduce an action programme to address inequalities, compliance with which will become a prerequisite for SCNI funding.

WALES

The Welsh Office has been involved in ensuring that the principles of sustainable development, which bring together concern for the environment, economic objectives and social needs, are built in to the functions of the National Assembly for Wales. The Government of Wales Act requires the Assembly to produce a scheme setting out how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to promote sustainable development.

The Welsh Office is drawing up plans for a National Conference on Sustainable Development to be held in Wales in the early part of next year. The particular focus of the conference is likely to be how the National Assembly should fulfil that responsibility. The conference will also draw on work being undertaken in preparation for the revised UK sustainable development strategy.

ARTICLE 14

RURAL WOMEN

1. *States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including working in the non-monetized sectors of the economy, and shall take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of this Convention to women in rural areas.*

2. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right:*

   a. to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels;

   b. to have access to adequate health care facilities, including information, counselling and services in family planning;

   c. to benefit directly from social security programmes;

   d. to obtain all types of training and education, formal and non-formal, including that relating to functional literacy as well as inter alia the benefit of all community and extension services, in order to increase their technical proficiency;

   e. to organise self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities through employment or self-employment;

   f. to participate in all community activities;

   g. to have access to agriculture credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reforms as well as in land resettlement schemes;

   h. to enjoy adequate living conditions, particularly in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport and communications.

Introduction

While the difference between urban and rural society is diminishing, the Government recognises that people who live and work in rural areas have specific needs, such as public services and transport. The populations of both rural and urban areas is mobile, but the Government aims to ensure that people who live and work in rural areas are not disadvantaged in doing so.

Institutions in rural UK

The Rural Development Commission (RDC) is the Government agency with responsibility for the well-being of people who live and work in England's rural areas. Established in 1909 as the Development Commission, it now encourages and assists others to carry out measures to further regeneration and community action in the countryside. The Commission focuses its work on the 31 priority Rural Development Areas which cover about 35% of the area of England, taking in some 2.75 million people. In the year 1998/99 the RDC has a budget of approximately £40 million and employs 300 staff. It has a statutory duty to advise the Government on all matters relating to the economic and social development of these areas. As such it takes an active interest in the position of women in the countryside.

The work the RDC is carrying out in relation to women takes several forms. Its programmes address both local and national problems facing women who live in rural areas. These include issues such as limited employment opportunities, lack of affordable childcare and poor provision of public transport. Through the Rural Development Programme (RDP) the Commission has funded local childcare projects. Funding has also been made available for training for women returning to employment to enhance their Information Technology and business skills. Many of these projects are discussed further later in this Article.

The Government announced in March 1998 that the Rural Development Commission and the Countryside Commission would merge from 1 April 1999. This will create a strong new body to champion rural England and will draw on the strengths and experiences of the two existing bodies. The new organisation will have a close working relationship with the new Regional Development Agencies.

Rural Transport

Cars are the main mode of transport for both men and women. The transport needs of women in rural areas tend to be dependent on their access to a car, as public transport availability is variable. Overall, about 80% of men are main drivers in households, whereas about 66% of women are. Women who are main drivers in the household travel 50% further than the average travelled for all women, emphasising their dependency on access to a car.

The accessibility needs of rural areas was a major consideration in the Government's 1998 review of transport policy. Proposals were set out in the White Paper, *A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone*. Most of the proposals have a rural dimension to them. In particular, local transport plans and legislation to provide for the proper regulation of buses will provide a much sounder base for local authorities to develop more effective strategies in rural areas.

As evidence of the Government's commitment to improve public transport services in rural areas, and as part of its developing integrated transport strategy, the Chancellor announced in his March 1998 Budget an additional £50 million of funding to assist public transport in rural areas.

The majority of these funds will be used to support bus services. Ministers have recently announced the arrangements for allocating £32.5 million to rural bus services in England, targeting the money on the most rural areas to provide new and additional bus services. This represents very significant additional funding, in some cases more than doubling existing local authority provision.

A new Rural Transport Partnership Fund has been set up, with £4.2 million pa for the next three years, to be administered by the Rural Development Commission. The scheme is intended to reduce the social exclusion of rural people by giving them better access to jobs, services and social activity through long-term improvements to transport services. It will achieve this by creating partnerships between communities, the voluntary sector, local authorities and the private sector to identify transport needs and ways of meeting them, and taking action to do so.

Another £5 million was allocated at the end of 1998 as part of a Rural Bus Challenge Fund to promote innovative local authority schemes in England, for example, to improve passenger information and demonstrate cost-effective services. The Secretary of State's guidance to local authorities on the criteria and arrangements for the Rural Bus Challenge Fund draws attention to the fact that bus services are often particularly important to women, and makes clear that he hopes authorities will take the needs of women carefully into account in matters such as the routing and timing of new services, as well as more generally in putting together bids for challenge funding.

The Rural Development Commission continues to administer funding for the Rural Transport Development Fund. Its budget for 1997/8 was £1.6 million and for 1998/99 £1.4 million. Between 1986 and 31 March 1998 it has helped nearly 840 rural transport schemes.

Employment and Training

In recent years, the economy in rural areas in the UK has become more diversified. Small firms are in the vanguard and their growth is greater in rural areas - this is why rural areas generally enjoy lower levels of unemployment than other parts of the country.

14.1 Female Sectoral Employment in 1996

Annual Employment Survey - 1996	Rural Districts
Manufacturing	11%
Banking, finance and insurance etc.	15%
Construction	2%
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	28%
Transport and communications	3%
Public administration, education & health	36%
Other services	5%

Source: Rural Development Commission, Dept. of the Environment, Transport and the Regions.

Note: These figures do not include self-employment and agriculture has been excluded.

Nonetheless, the government recognises there are particular problems in rural areas, including lack of employment opportunity and seasonality of employment, which are faced by women and men alike. Special factors in rural areas are often related to the relative inaccessibility and sparse density of the population and services of the areas, and the difficulty of finding suitable local childcare. The Government is acting through a mixture of national initiatives such as the New Deal programmes, and other targeted support such as advice from Business Links and Training and Enterprise Councils, to address these issues.

New Deal

The Rural Development Commission (RDC) and local authorities have made an important contribution to the Government's thinking on rural unemployment problems as part of the New Deal. Employment Service (ES) staff are in discussions with local bus companies about tackling the problems of accessing New Deal services in rural areas where little or no public transport is available. Local solutions are being developed: for example Cornwall's Rural Transport Subsidy Scheme. The ES and RDC are working together to help support projects that will test solutions to delivering the New Deal to remote rural communities.

The RDC has funded through its Policy Development Fund a national demonstration project with the National Federation of Women's Institutes to extend and develop their existing programme to accredit women's voluntary experience through the RSA Advance Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups (ADOCG). The aim of this project was to develop access to centres offering new qualifications for women in rural areas and to train and support a network of assessors for the ADOCG drawn from the WI and other bodies. The project aimed to establish up to 12 centres with a total of 150 women obtaining the Advanced Diploma.

Other work commissioned recently includes the RDC and Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) research document on the economic activity of women in rural areas, a joint research report between the RDC and National Association of Women's Organisations about black and ethnic minority women in rural areas called *Staring at Invisible Women* and an article about positive initiatives to recognise and counteract the difficulties faced by women working in rural areas.

Rural Childcare

In January 1996 the RDC approved funding for a further three years for a Rural Childcare Adviser to build on the work of the Rural Childcare Initiative. A new partnership agreement between the National Council for Voluntary Childcare Organisations and Action with Communities in Rural England will develop a model of good practice for the voluntary child welfare sector through which local rural development agencies, together with statutory agencies, will produce services for children and families in rural areas. It will ensure that local authorities take account of rural issues in formulating their plans for children's services and their review of daycare provision. It will encourage them to develop innovative partnerships to stimulate new childcare projects and enhance existing provision in rural areas by working with Rural Community Councils, local authorities and childcare charities.

The RDC, in conjunction with the Kids' Club Network (KCN), has also funded demonstration projects which raise the profile of affordable, out of school childcare and develop pilot projects tailored to rural circumstances. Now in its second phase, this area of work is concentrating on training, the economic role of childcare in rural areas and work with the Consortium of Rural TECs (CORT), employers and trade unions. The RDC in partnership with KCN and CORT held a conference about rural childcare in December 1997 to assess the economic and social benefits to local communities. The conference focused on the role of distance learning, employer participation and rural case studies and the following issues were highlighted:

- rural areas do not have the pool of trained workers to draw upon in contrast to urban areas;
- qualified childcare workers tend to work in urban areas where there is a wider range of jobs;
- opportunities for staff to undertake formal training are limited in rural areas and training centres are often some distance away;
- training costs to develop childcare National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) may also be higher in rural areas; and
- there are fewer NVQ assessors and assessment centres in rural areas presenting a major barrier to those wishing to become qualified. (The CORT research showed that of the 200 assessment centres surveyed, only 10 were based in rural areas.)

Agriculture and Rural Issues

In common with other traditionally male-dominated sectors such as engineering, women are now much more likely to enter the agricultural industry. Their qualifications are not necessarily in the traditional agricultural subjects, but they are beginning to make their mark and to be recognised in their own right as valuable contributors to the land-based industry generally.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's contractual arrangements with Lantra, the National Training Organisation for the land-based sector, include provisions for the maintenance of national, quality-assured, training provider and instructor registers. Of the 624 training instructors registered with Lantra, some 62 (10%) are female. However, women make up 60% (197) of training providers, in contrast to the 130 men registered as providers. There were some 15,000 course participants in 1997/98. In addition, around 200 (13%) of the 1,514 places on Modern Apprenticeships in agriculture and commercial horticulture are taken by women.

As far as NVQ attainment is concerned, in 1997, 860 males achieved NVQ Level 1, 2 or 3, whereas only 101 females achieved these levels. Female achievement was predominately in the nursery, crop production and livestock areas.

Women make up around 40% of student provision in the 40 or so agricultural colleges. However, many of the courses undertaken are those which traditionally tend to be filled by women, such as floristry and small animal care. Several colleges are beginning to provide child care facilities for both students and staff. The Further Education Funding Council (funds allocated by DfEE) have allocated £5m worth of pump-priming funds to assist further education colleges to create new out-of-school childcare places. The funding has come from the Windfall Tax and is expected to contribute 10,000 additional places. Applications from colleges were required by September 1998.

Female representation on educational committees dealing with agriculture and commercial horticulture is gradually increasing, indeed several of the more recent appointees to agricultural college principal posts are women. At the start of the 1998/99 academic year, 4 out of 60 college Principals (6.6%) were women and several deputy Principals are women.

In 1998 the National Farmer's Union launched a new awards scheme. One of the award categories is "Farming Woman of the Year". Entries were short-listed in December 1998 and the awards will be presented at the NFU's Annual Dinner in February 1999.

The Agricultural Wages Order made by the Agricultural Wages Board, now ensures that both full and part-time workers have the same minimum terms and conditions of employment, reducing discrimination against part-time workers in agriculture, of which a significant proportion are women.

Rural Women's Day

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers has designated October 15th each year as World Rural Women's Day to highlight the largely unrecognised contribution of rural women working in agriculture to the production of food and the development of rural areas. The first day was held in 1997 and was launched in England by Joan Ruddock MP, the then Minister for Women. The 1998 event centred around a national conference held at the Royal Society in London. It was organised by the National Farmers' Union (NFU) in conjunction with the Women's Food and Farming Union, the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs and the Country Landowners' Association.

The London Conference recognised the increasingly important part women are playing in agriculture and aimed to provide women farmers with business training and support so they can develop this role. A survey conducted by the NFU in 1996 found that more than a quarter of farmers' wives run additional businesses on the farm, and with the current economic difficulties facing agriculture are increasingly becoming an integral part of the farm operation. The conference was designed to equip this fast emerging workforce of women wishing to establish or further develop their business ideas with the skills necessary to run a small business.

A testament to this business interest is the fact that the number of women enrolling on agricultural training courses now outnumbers men. Figures from the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service show around 2,500 women enrolled on such training courses last year compared with 2,000 men.

The Rural Women's Network

The first Rural Women's Day in 1997 included a series of workshops to identify the main difficulties facing women in agriculture. What emerged from the event was that if farming wants to attract women to the industry in future, it will need to offer more than the traditional farmhouse role. To help women establish themselves in agriculture, delegates called for the creation of a Rural Women's Network. This would pull together existing organisations to focus on key issues facing rural women. The group would meet regularly to develop strategy and progress. This is being established by the National Farmer's Union Women's Group.

SCOTLAND

The Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF) was established in 1996 to provide resources to support community development throughout rural Scotland and totalled £4.17 million in 1998/9. Within it, the Rural Challenge Fund aims to encourage women and young people to take up work, by for example, providing childcare and training facilities. £194,000 has been allocated from the Rural Challenge Fund in 1998/9 to projects aimed at improving childcare provision in rural parts of Scotland. Nearly £34,000 has also been offered in 1998/9 to three Rural Partnerships which promote, support or provide childcare in Scotland.

The particular difficulties in delivering childcare and other programmes affecting women in rural areas, where the low population density can make it difficult to achieve a "critical mass" to set up provision, are being addressed. A Rural Issues Sub-Group exists to ensure the New D[illegible] takes full account of the rural situation.

Rural Transport

The Scottish Office published the findings of a study *Car Dependence in Rural Scotland* in June 1998. It found that 89% of households in rural Scotland have a car, and cars were used for 76.5% of all journeys, followed by walking (17.5% of journeys) and public transport (4%). Although there were no differences in the number of journeys, men make a higher proportion of their journeys by car, and their car journeys are significantly longer than those of women. The study found that for those in more remote households, running a car was more of a necessity, even for the lowest income groups.

Following the Budget in March 1998, similar arrangements for rural transport in Scotland have been made to those described for England. A Rural Transport Funding Package provides £13.5 million over 3 years to improve transport links in rural Scotland. Of this, £10.5 million is being used for subsidising public transport services, mainly to provide new and additional bus services; £1.8 million is being used for community transport projects, under a programme administered by the Community Transport Association; and £1.2 million is being used to help rural petrol stations so as to retain a vital network of petrol stations in remoter areas.

NORTHERN IRELAND

In Northern Ireland, women play a prominent role in rural areas through the Rural Development Programme, holding 13 management posts in the 23 LEADER II Groups and 4 management posts in the Rural Development Programme's 8 Area Based Strategies, some of which have specific women's themes. Women are also represented on the Boards of these partnerships.

Opportunities for rural women have increased in the "cottage industries", for example Country Markets (NI) Ltd has over 150 producers, the majority of whom are women. In 1997/98 over £89,000 in project payments were made to women's groups.

The Rural Development Council for Northern Ireland has conducted research to assess the extent and nature of women's involvement in rural and community development. It recently assisted the formation of a practitioners' forum which works to improve rural women's participation in the opportunities and decision making in relation to rural development. At a recent conference the forum explored the role and experience of women of different ages in the life of rural communities.

The Rural Development Council was part of the planning group for a 1998 conference entitled "The Women's Sector: Into the Next Generation", which involved women's networks, centres and groups, the statutory and voluntary sectors, and local and regional support agencies.

In Northern Ireland similar training opportunities to those offered by the Rural Community Councils in GB are available from a variety of sources. Support from the Northern Ireland Rural Development Council enables voluntary community groups to play a role in the provision of mother and toddler groups and the formation of economic and social development groups led by women.

Under the INTERREG II Community Economic Development Measure, the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI) has provided funding for the Northern element of a cross border rural childcare project. The project is a two year Action Research initiative which aims to improve the range, level and quality of day care opportunities for young children and to facilitate the increased participation of rural women in the workplace.

WALES

A new rural partnership for Wales - an advisory body which brings together representatives of the Welsh Office, Welsh Development Agency (WDA), Welsh Local Government Association, the Farming Unions and other key players with an interest in the countryside to contribute to the future development of rural programmes and policies in Wales, was announced in 1998.

In identifying policy and practice capable of delivering substantial benefits to rural Wales, as well as informing the preparation of a new rural agenda for Wales for consideration by the National Assembly, the Partnership will ensure that equal opportunities are an integral part of its deliberations.

The Welsh Office has established three industry-led working groups to develop action plans for achieving this in the lamb, beef, dairy and organic food sectors. The action plans are due to be published in Spring 1999 and the Welsh Office and the WDA will be working with the industry to take these plans forward. Given the dependency of rural areas on these industries, their development will increase the opportunities available to farmers, their families and the rural community as a whole.

A further measure is the work that the Welsh Office is undertaking with Lantra, the farming unions, the TECs and other bodies to develop a comprehensive training strategy for the farming community. This strategy will enable farmers and their families to maximise their economic opportunities on farms and help to provide alternative skills to equip them for employment in other sectors.

ARTICLE 15 :

EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

1. *States Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.*

2. *States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity. In particular, they shall give women equal rights to conclude contracts and to administer property and shall treat them equally in all stages of procedure in courts and tribunals.*

3. *States Parties agree that all contracts and all other private instruments of any kind with a legal effect which is directed at restricting the legal capacity of women shall be deemed null and void.*

4. *States Parties shall accord to men and women the same rights with regard to the law relating to the movement of persons and the freedom to choose their residence and domicile.*

Although the UK is a unitary state, it does not have a single legal system. England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland all have their own systems, with differences in law, organisation and practice. This situation arises from the different arrangements that existed in the constituent parts of the country before they were united.

Judicial Appointments

The Lord Chancellor has repeatedly stressed that discrimination has no place in the judicial appointments process. His policy is to appoint to each judicial post in England and Wales the candidate who appears to him to be the best qualified regardless of gender, ethnic origin, marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion or disability, except where the disability prevents the fulfilment of the physical requirements of the office. In addition to appointments made on merit, the Lord Chancellor's guiding principles are that candidates who are interested in becoming judges should apply for appointment; that the appointments process must be founded on real equality of opportunity; and that everyone should have access to information about the qualities and skills sought in a potential judge. To encourage more women to apply for judicial appointments, and to help the progress of successful candidates, the Lord Chancellor has introduced the following initiatives:

- a transfer of resources within his department to ensure that officials are able to dedicate more time to developing equal opportunities in judicial appointments;

- to ensure appropriate flexibility in part-time sitting arrangements, it will be possible for those who have had a career break for family reasons to apply to undertake their sittings as Assistant Recorders in concentrated blocks, rather than their sittings being spread over a number of years as usual. That will give those who have taken a career break the chance to catch up with those who have not;

- an increase in the upper age limit for appointment as an Assistant Recorder from 50 to 53; that limit will continue to be applied flexibly to provide opportunities for those who become lawyers later than usual or who have taken a career break;

- an end to the system of appointments to the High Court bench by invitation only to allow applications to be made, thereby assuring all with judicial ambitions that their cases are properly considered;

- a scheme will be developed to allow an individual to "work shadow" a judge to learn what it would be like to sit judicially;

- a mentoring scheme will also be developed in which District and Circuit Judges will be asked to advise and guide their more junior colleagues in the part-time judiciary;

- in consultation with the judiciary, improved arrangements will be introduced for the appraisal of performance of part-time judges to improve the assessments of performance which contribute to the Lord Chancellor's decisions on applications for full-time office; and

- consideration is to be given to the appointment of an ombudsman to examine fully complaints from anyone who feels unfairly treated by the appointments process. In the meantime the Lord Chancellor will personally investigate any claims of discrimination.

The number of women judges is, at least in part, a reflection of the number of women in the legal profession with the appropriate years of experience. The number of women with the appropriate seniority for appointment is growing as more women enter the profession and the number of women in the judiciary continues to show a steady increase, as shown in the higher percentage of women in the part-time ranks of the judiciary than at the full-time level. Latest figures show that in 1994 women made up almost 8% of the judiciary and in 1997 this figure had risen slightly to 9%. The Lord Chancellor supports the action taken by the Bar Council and the Law Society to promote equal opportunities within the profession and his officials are involved in a joint working group on equal opportunities in judicial appointments which comprises members of both branches of the profession. The Lord Advocate follows a similar policy in Scotland. The legal profession in Scotland is encouraging more women advocates and solicitors to make themselves available for judicial appointments.

The Lord Chancellor's policy is also applied to Northern Ireland where 7% of the judiciary are women. There is one female County Court Judge, 1% of the total; one female District Judge, 25% of the total; and one female Resident Magistrate, 6% of the total.

15.1 Men and women in the judiciary in England and Wales: 1994 and 1997

	1994		1997	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Lords of Appeal in Ordinary	10	0	12	0
Lord Justices of Appeal	28	1	34	1
High Court Judges	89	6	90	7
Circuit Judges	485	29	522	30
District Judges	270	29	297	38
Recorders	825	41	841	71
Assistant Recorders	330	61	280	57
All	2,037	167	2,076	204

Source : Lord Chancellor's Department

In addition, however, women play a key role as lay magistrates in England and Wales and in Northern Ireland. Lay magistrates are men and women without legal qualification who sit in a judicial capacity in local courts on a part-time voluntary basis. In England and Wales women accounted for 43% of lay magistrates in 1989, rising to 46% in 1993 and 48% in 1998. In Northern Ireland 20% of the 919 Justices of the Peace are women and 56% of the 133 Lay Panel Members of the Juvenile Court are women.

In Scotland, there is one female judge out of 26; 11 female Sheriffs out of 106 (8.9%) and 6 female Temporary Sheriffs out of 118.

Legal Aid

English Law provides assistance in the form of legal aid to people who wish to pursue legal remedies before the courts. The conditions for granting legal aid or advice under the Legal Aid Act 1988 are that a person's income and capital should fall within certain prescribed limits and that it is reasonable for such an action to be brought. Women are just as eligible as men for legal aid providing the prescribed conditions are fulfilled.

In the financial years 1996/97 and 1997/98, of the certificates used in matrimonial proceedings, more than twice as many certificates were granted to women as to men. The relevant figures are set out below. Of the certificates issued in this area in both years, the majority of women were plaintiffs and the men, defendants.

15.2 Legal Aid Certificates granted in England and Wales : 1996/97/98

1996/97	PLAINTIFFS	DEFENDANTS	TOTAL
Women	60,875	6,545	67,420
Men	11,856	16,105	27,961
1997/98	**PLAINTIFFS**	**DEFENDANTS**	**TOTAL**
Women	56,530	5,754	62,284
Men	10,645	13,418	24,063

Source: Lord Chancellor's Department

Support for victims in court

The Crown Court Witness Service (CCWS) offers practical information, advice and emotional support to victims and witnesses - in all criminal cases - attending the Crown Court. The service is managed by Victim Support, the national organisation providing help for victims, which is funded by the Home Office. The CCWS began on a pilot basis in 7 courts in 1990. Since then, schemes have been established in all Crown Court centres. The Government has agreed to fund improved support services to witnesses in the magistrates' courts and is currently considering what type of service is needed and who should manage it.

On 10 June 1998, the Government published *Speaking up for Justice*, the report of the interdepartmental working group on vulnerable or intimidated witnesses. The Government established this review to take forward, in England and Wales, its manifesto commitment to provide greater protection for vulnerable victims and witnesses in the criminal justice system. There are parallel working groups in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The *Speaking up for Justice* report contains 78 recommendations which aim to improve the way in which vulnerable or intimidated witnesses, including women who are victims of domestic violence, are treated, with the aim of improving their access to justice. In particular, it outlines a scheme which would identify a vulnerable or intimidated witness at an early stage in the police investigation, and pick up on the individual needs of the witness. This would enable decisions to be taken on the appropriate methods of interview and investigation. The prosecution and defence would be able to apply to the court for special measures to be made available to assist the witness during the trial including the use of live CCTV links so they do not have to give evidence in open court, or screens to protect the witness from the defendant.

The report also includes a number of recommendations which relate specifically to victims of rape and serious sexual offences including:

- proposals to amend the law to set out clearly the limited circumstances when the complainant's sexual history may be admitted in evidence;

- giving the courts a statutory power to exclude the public from the court when the victim of a rape or serious sexual offence is giving evidence; and

- a mandatory prohibition on un-represented defendants personally cross-examining the complainant in cases of rape and serious sexual assault.

Those recommendations in the report requiring legislation are included in th provisions in the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Bill which was brough before Parliament in the 1998/99 session.

ARTICLE 16

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS

1. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:*

   a. The same right to enter into marriage;

   b. The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent;

   c. The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and its dissolution;

   d. The same rights and responsibilities as parents, irrespective of their marital status, in matters relating to their children; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

   e. The same rights to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights;

   f. The same rights and responsibilities with regard to guardianship, wardship, trusteeship and adoption of children, or similar institutions where these concepts exist in national legislation; in all cases the interests of the children shall be paramount;

   g. The same personal rights as husband and wife, including the right to choose a family name, a profession and an occupation;

   h. The same rights for both spouses in respect of ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property, whether free of charge or for a valuable consideration.

2. *The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.*

The Family

In November 1998 the Government published a programme of measures which was aimed at strengthening family life by supporting families with children. The document demonstrated the Government's responsibility to support families through its policies and to help parents to meet their children's needs.

The document made clear that the Government did not wish to interfere in family life or in adults' personal relationships. The Government believes that marriage provides the strongest foundation for stable relationships, and therefore wants to strengthen the institution of marriage and help more marriages succeed.

The consultation paper concentrated on five areas where Government can make a difference to:

- provide better support to parents to ensure that every parent has access to the advice and support they need, improving services they need;
- give better financial support to families to improve family prosperity and reduce child poverty;
- help families balance work and home to that it is easier for parents to spend time with their children;
- strengthen marriage to help protect the interests of children and reduce family breakdown; and
- take more seriously problems of family life, including domestic violence and school-age pregnancy.

The consultation document marked the beginning of a debate. It sets out a major programme of action, some of which is already being implemented and some of which is the subject of consultation.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Women's Unit has been working in collaboration with other government departments, statutory agencies, NGOs and the voluntary sector on ways to prevent violence against women wherever possible, and provide protection, provision of services and justice for women where violence has occurred.

The Unit plans to publish a document in Spring 1999, setting out the Government's commitment and approach to working for the protection and safety of all women. The document will highlight good practice and promote the case for inter-agency working, setting out a programme of practical measures to achieve this.

The Women's Unit continues to consult a wide spectrum of NGOs and academics who are experts in the field of violence against women, thereby facilitating the greater involvement of the NGO sector in this area of Government policy. The Unit is working in partnership with the EU Commission and other Member States to take forward the work on violence against women, to affirm its commitment to this issue and demonstrate commitment to a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach.

The Safety of Women

The Women's Unit is working with other government departments to develop proposals for funding under the Crime Reduction Programme. The Unit is also working in partnership with the Departments of Health (DoH) and the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) on the first ever comprehensive research study into the accommodation and support services for households experiencing domestic violence.

Domestic Violence

The Inter-Departmental Official Group on Domestic Violence continues its work of supporting Ministers in the promotion of a co-ordinated response to the problem at national and local level, and in taking forward Government policy in general. In particular the Group is considering ways of improving statistics on domestic violence both within and beyond the criminal justice system, and a renewed public awareness campaign. Since 1997 this work has also been closely monitored by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women's Issues.

It is now generally accepted that stereotypical attitudes of appropriate roles for men and women and in particular the power imbalance between the sexes contribute to male violence against women. Since the last report, there have been a number of campaigns throughout the country to counter domestic violence including a new campaign to be launched by the Home Office in January 1999. The main objectives of these have been to raise public awareness of the essential criminality of this type of behaviour and to inform victims where they can get help and advice.

The Home Office Programme Development Unit has funded experimental projects to develop a programme of activities and discussion sessions for use in schools and youth clubs which concentrate on gender relations and family violence. Re-education on issues of gender and violence is the philosophy underlying a number of court-ordered treatment programmes for men found guilty of violence against their female partners.

Extent of the problem

Violent crime is an area of particular concern to women. The findings of the 1996 British Crime Survey (BCS) indicate that women tend to be more anxious about their personal safety than men. However, the survey - which asks a large representative sample of adults in England and Wales directly about their experience of crime, whether or not reported to the police - shows that overall, women are less likely to be the victims of violence than men and that they are more likely to be attacked by someone they know than by a stranger.

Although crime surveys are known to under-count the extent of domestic violence, 44% of the violent incidents women revealed to the BCS were classified as domestic in that they involved a current or former partner, other household member or relative. Only 12% of violence against men was recorded as domestic. Over nine in ten of domestic incidents against women were perpetrated by men.

The higher risk that women face from violence by people with whom they are or have been in an intimate relationship is also indicated by homicide figures. In England and Wales in 1996, of 681 offences currently recorded as homicide, one-third of the victims were women. 44% of the female victims were killed by current or former spouses or lovers, compared with only 6% of male victims.

Whilst in some cases men are undoubtedly the victims of domestic violence, current action focuses primarily on domestic violence against women.

16.1 Sex of offenders by sex of victim, 1996

	Sex of victim	Sex of offender		
		Male(s) %	Female(s) %	Mixed sex group %
Domestic	Male	50	48	2
	Female	90	10	1
	All victims	79	21	1
Mugging	Male	94	2	3
	Female	96	2	2
	All victims	95	2	3
Stranger	Male	89	1	10
	Female	62	22	16
	All victims	83	6	12
Acquaintance	Male	92	1	7
	Female	55	39	7
	All victims	81	13	7
All contact crime	Male	87	7	7
	Female	76	20	5
	All victims	82	12	6

Source : British Crime Survey, Home Office, 1996

Sexual Violence

There are a number of specific recommendations contained in the *Speaking Up For Justice* report which relate specifically to victims of rape and serious sexual offences, which may lead to an increase in the number of convictions. The UK Government has, in addition, undertaken a study to discover what factors influence whether or not a recorded rape leads to a conviction for rape and whether such factors have changed since a similar study of 1985 cases.

An interim report on the processing of rape cases in the criminal justice system in England and Wales sets out the emerging findings of this study. It provides some useful information on where reported rape cases drop out before they reach court. However, before the UK Government can decide what further action may need to be taken, it will need to consider in greater detail the findings of the report on why so many cases fail to result in a conviction. It is due for publication in Spring 1999.

Prevention

The Government recognises that the fear of crime itself can be very disabling and that many women feel vulnerable. The provision of balanced crime prevention plays an important part in helping people to reduce the risks of crime happening to them, and in reducing the fear of crime. A wide range of action is being undertaken to prevent domestic violence in the long term.

An inter-agency circular was launched in 1994 in England and Wales setting out the Government's policy on domestic violence together with an agreed statement of local responsibilities. Independent research published in 1996 showed that innovative co-ordinating, preventative and educational work had been undertaken in many areas. The research found that by 1996 over 200 domestic violence forums had been set up across England, Wales and Scotland to co-ordinate the fight against domestic violence in their local communities. No one model of practice emerged in the research. Rather, groups operated in a number of different ways, according to their make-up and leadership, and their local situation.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 builds on the importance of local agency co-ordination by placing a responsibility on local authorities and the police to form crime and disorder partnerships with other local agencies. These partnerships are required to conduct an audit of local crime and disorder problems and then devise a strategy for dealing with these. The Government stressed in the guidance to the Act that it expected partnerships to identify the level of domestic violence in their area and to include measures to tackle it as part of their crime reduction strategy.

The Home Office crime prevention guide *Your Practical Guide to Crime Prevention* was revised in July 1998 and issued in the following languages: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, Gujurati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and Welsh. It gives advice on how people - women in particular - can reduce the risk of assault, including useful advice on safety while driving. The advice includes a section which attempts to raise men's awareness of the issue of women's safety and gives suggestions for action which they can take to help reduce women's fear of attack.

Personal, Social and Health Education

Schools have a role to play in helping to equip young people with the skills, knowledge and attitudes they will require now and in later life. Schools are required by law to provide a curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of its pupils and prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Schools take this responsibility concerning the curriculum very seriously.

Many schools meet these requirements through the provision of comprehensive programmes of Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE); such programmes can include education about relationships, self-esteem, rights and responsibilities, amongst other topics. Further information about new developments is considered under Article 10.

Criminal Justice Procedures to deal with domestic violence

Following guidance issued to police forces in 1990 (England, Wales and Scotland) and 1991 (Northern Ireland), all UK police forces now have policy statements on domestic violence. In many forces, Domestic Violence Units have been set up or Domestic Violence Officers appointed, with particular responsibility for following through incidents of domestic violence, particularly in giving support and advice to victims and helping them to get in touch with relevant outside agencies.

A Home Office study on policing domestic violence published in 1995 particularly commended the work being done by Domestic Violence Units and Domestic Violence Officers, and showed that their introduction had had a very positive impact on victim satisfaction. A further research project on effective policing structures for domestic violence has recently been completed.

An evaluation has been carried out by the Home Office of a repeat victimisation policing response to domestic violence in West Yorkshire; an interim report on this project has been published and shows that progressively more intensive interventions appear to reduce repeat police attendance.

The review and conduct of criminal proceedings in England and Wales is the responsibility of the Crown Prosecution Service. In May 1998 the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate published a thematic report on cases involving domestic violence. This report found that staff were fully aware of the need to treat cases of domestic violence seriously; that relations with other agencies were good; and that the quality of decision making was high. In particular, representatives of the charity Victim Support acknowledged that great strides had been made in the manner in which prosecutors and caseworkers dealt with victims who attend court.

Protection & Provision

The accommodation and support needs of those fleeing domestic violence are addressed through a combination of local and national action. Local responsibility for services and the control of resources enables housing and social services authorities and other agencies to own the issues, co-ordinate action and develop services in the light of local circumstances. At a national level, the Government recognises the need to develop a framework for local action, to raise the profile of the issues and encourage and monitor local agencies' progress. Government departments are working closely together to achieve co-ordination of effort.

In relation to accommodation and support provision, the key players at the local level are housing and social services authorities together with voluntary agencies. In many areas these are local women's groups which often run refuges, outreach and follow-up advice and support. Local housing authorities have a statutory responsibility to offer accommodation to women with children who leave their homes because of domestic violence. The Housing Act 1996 introduced provisions to strengthen the position of those forced to flee accommodation as a result of violence.

In June 1998 the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Women's Unit and Department of Health commissioned research to establish a comprehensive database of the accommodation and support services available to households experiencing domestic violence. The findings of this research will contribute to the development of a strategy for tackling domestic violence. In addition, the research will identify what works well, and produce guidance for local authorities on the range of options for addressing the accommodation and support needs for households experiencing domestic violence. The research will be completed by July 1999.

The research has been commissioned in two parts. Women's Aid Federation (England) is in the process of undertaking a series of surveys of all its 260 refuge groups. Information will be collected on numbers of refuges and move-on properties (including bed spaces and family places), refuge funding and usage, and the advice and support services provided by refuge groups. The second part of the research is a local authority based information collection. Information about the accommodation and support services provided within every local housing authority area, including services provided or used by social services authorities, will be collected. Information about the costs of provision and its suitability as assessed by both providers and users are being an integral part of this study.

This is the first time Government has commissioned a comprehensive package of research into the provision on accommodation and support services for households experiencing domestic violence in England. Previous research commissioned by the Department of the Environment in 1995 focused on the number of refuges provided by refuge groups in England, including bed spaces and family places. The 1995 survey was undertaken by Women's Aid, and indicated that there was a total of 418 refuges in England. Of this total, 78 were Stage 2 houses, that is half-way or move-on accommodation into which a woman may move from a Stage 1 house until she is permanently re-housed. Up to date information on refuge provision in England will be available in Spring 1999.

The Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions will shortly publish guidance for social landlords in the formation of policies for managing effectively the housing consequences of relationship breakdown - *Relationship Breakdown: A Guide for Social Landlords*. The guidance covers both violent and non-violent breakdown and is designed to assist social landlords in developing a well-thought out policy for dealing with relationship breakdown. One of the key messages of the guidance is that a well-thought out policy and intervention at an early stage will reduce the disruption and upheaval for those undergoing relationship breakdown, and prevent a situation from worsening.

Public Awareness

In August 1995, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), responsible for prosecuting criminal cases resulting from police investigations in England and Wales, updated their public statement CPS *Policy for Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence*. In May 1998, the CPS Inspectorate published their report on the thematic review of cases involving domestic violence. In response, Action Plans have been produced to implement Inspectorate recommendations.

Throughout the period of this report the CPS has played an active part in inter-agency forums seeking to tackle the issue of domestic violence and to improve standards of victim/witness care.

Women's refuges are generally run by voluntary groups with resources from a variety of sources such as local authorities, housing associations and charitable trusts. Housing Corporation capital and revenue resources can contribute to building and housing management costs, where local authorities identify the development of refuges as a priority. The Housing Corporation currently provides a revenue grant to support some 3,500 refuge bed spaces in England. The Women's Aid Federation (England) receives core funding from a number of central Government departments, including in 1997/98, £217,000 from the Department of Health. The charity Victim Support helps those who suffer domestic violence as well the victims of other offences. In June 1997 the Government announced an increase of £1m per year for this organisation, taking their annual baseline from £11.7m to £12.7m and allowing them to set up a helpline.

In November 1997 the Government published for consultation the objectives of an inter-Departmental review of funding for supported accommodation, led by the Department of Social Security. These objectives include encouraging coherent and transparent planning, funding and accountability arrangements for support services, at the appropriate level, in the context of wider community care and related programmes; and ensuring that the funding system can respond to individuals' needs and enable support to be provided in different types of accommodation and tenures.

CHILD SUPPORT

The Government recognises that all children have a right to the financial and emotional support of both their parents. Children are better off, financially and emotionally, when both parents meet their responsibilities. The overwhelming majority of parents with caring responsibilities (95%) are women.

In July 1998, the Government published a Green Paper *Children First: a new approach to child support* setting out proposals for a new, local, customer-focused child support scheme based on a radically simpler method of assessment. The main proposals are:

- **a child maintenance disregard**: parents with care receiving Income Support will be able to keep up to £10 per week of any maintenance paid for their children;

- **a simpler method of assessment**: those non-resident parents earning £200 per week or more will pay 15% for one child, 20% for 2 children and 25% for 3 or more children. For those with incomes of less than £100 per week there will be a flat rate payment of £5 and for those with incomes of between £100 and £200 there will be a sliding scale. Allowance will be made for children in the non-resident parent's new family;

- **a three stage** decision making process: the first stage will be the maintenance assessment. Parents who wish to question the assessment can move to stage two which will allow decision of the assessment and any errors to be corrected. The third stage will be a Tribunal consideration for the few cases where disputes have not been resolved at stage 2 or parents have special expenses.

The new scheme will improve the situation for lone mothers - maintenance should be assessed quickly and accurately, providing a vital bridge from dependency on benefit to the world of work.

The scheme will also work better with other support for families such as information meetings before divorce and mediation. It will support continuing contact for non-resident parents and make improved provision for parents who have shared care of their children.

The consultation period on the Green Paper ended on 30 November 1998. Legislative and operational constraints mean that the new scheme is unlikely to be introduced before 2001. However, a number of improvements are already underway or planned within the Child Support Agency to pave the way for radical reform, including:

- extended working hours;
- a simpler and more efficient process for making and appealing decisions; and
- reorganisation to centralise processing work and free local staff to concentrate on providing advice face to face for those clients who require this service.

An extra £12 million has been allocated to the Child Support Agency in 1998/99 for a number of customer-focused initiatives including improvements to the telephone service and more user-friendly forms and letters. In addition, the Agency has been allocated an extra £15 million for 1998/99 and 1999/2000 to improve compliance.

Divorce Law

Part II of the Family Law Act deals with the grounds for divorce. When Part II is implemented, divorce will be based on the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage evidenced by a statement of marital breakdown followed by a period for reflection and consideration.

The person making a statement of marital breakdown will first be required to attend an information meeting which will provide them with details of marriage support services to offer the best opportunity of saving marriages which may be saved, and information on a range of issues which may need to be considered when making arrangements for their future lives apart. The range of issues on which information is given will include domestic violence, the availability of legal advice and representation, legal aid, financial matters, mediation and issues relating to parenting after divorce. Parties will be encouraged to consider whether mediation might be an appropriate means of resolving any disputes over the arrangements for the future which arise if they proceed to divorce.

Anyone wishing to contest the divorce or make specified application in relation to children or financial matters will also first be required to attend an information meeting.

Women have exactly the same rights as men to apply for divorce or separation and to take advantage of the facilities of marriage counselling and mediation offered. They also have the same rights to apply for public assistance with the cost of legal representation in matrimonial proceedings, including the cost of marriage counselling in appropriate cases, and mediation.

Property Rights

When considering financial provision on divorce in England and Wales, the court is required to take into account all the circumstances of the case. First consideration is given to the welfare, while a minor, of any child of the family who has not attained the age of 18. It also has to take into account a number of factors, such as the income and capital resources of both parties, the length of the marriage and the contribution made by each of the parties to looking after the home and the children. Financial contributions by each party are also considered. In addition, the court must look at the needs and obligations of the parties in the foreseeable future so far as they are ascertainable. Conduct will be taken into account where it would be inequitable to disregard it. These principles apply equally to men and women. Each family is seen as unique and, therefore, each case is different and thus the wide discretionary powers invested in the courts by the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 are designed to permit the court to reach an equitable solution in individual cases.

The Government is considering possible reforms, to bring greater clarity and certainty to the law. The principles of any reform would apply equally to men and women.

Parental Rights and Responsibilities

Unmarried fathers who do not have or acquire parental responsibility may still bring some applications under the Children Act 1989, although in some instances the leave of the court will be required. A change in the law so that unmarried fathers who sign the birth certificate jointly with the mother will automatically have parental responsibility is under consideration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Violence against Women in Northern Ireland

The statistics for violent crime in NI for 1996 indicate that women were victims in 37% of all reported cases. 81% of all reported sexual crimes were against women, and for reported crimes against the person, i.e. murder, manslaughter and serious physical assault, females were the victims in more than one case in four. When the fear of crime was examined, in the age group 16-21, 42% of women expressed concern for their safety compared with only 9% of males in the same age group.

Strategy on Violence Against Women

The Northern Ireland Strategy on Violence Against Women, which is currently being drafted, will complement the National Strategy whilst addressing problems which are specific to Northern Ireland. It will also include current objectives and initiatives on tackling domestic violence.

Domestic Violence

Although domestic violence is a crime and prosecution through the criminal courts is one of the sanctions available, many women, in Northern Ireland, at least initially, require and seek the protection of the civil courts. In Northern Ireland, in 1996, 2293 interim and 994 full personal protection orders were made, with almost identical numbers of interim and full exclusion orders (2290 and 993 respectively).

Policy Statement on Domestic Violence

A Northern Ireland policy statement *Tackling Domestic Violence*, was published jointly by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Northern Ireland Office in June 1995. This identified four priorities for action as follows:

- to raise public awareness of domestic violence as a serious problem;
- to challenge seriously the attitudes and behaviour of those who perpetrate or condone domestic violence;
- to improve support and treatment services for survivors; and
- to build a clearer picture of the nature and extent of domestic violence.

Regional Forum on Domestic Violence

A Domestic Violence Regional Forum was established in September 1995. The Forum brings together the main statutory and voluntary interests, and provides the focal point for co-ordinating action to take forward the objectives set out in the policy framework. To date, the work of the Forum has included:

- establishing local inter-agency groups in each Health and Social Services Community Trust;
- developing training and information programmes for professionals dealing with domestic violence;
- a pilot scheme for cautioning first time offenders;
- a treatment programme for perpetrators;
- a public awareness campaign, including television advertising;
- action to improve the research and information base; and
- overseeing responses by the relevant agencies to the recommendations in a recent research report - *"Taking Domestic Violence Seriously - Issues*

for the Civil and the Criminal Justice System" (McWilliams and Spence 1996).

Preventative Measures on Domestic Violence

Under the aegis of the Northern Ireland Regional Forum on Domestic Violence work continues to improve mechanisms for inter-agency co-ordination and enhance links with the voluntary sector. The Forum brings together all the major stakeholders.

Research is being commissioned on:

- men's experience of domestic violence and abuse in relationships;
- victim confidence in the criminal justice system; and
- the need for a co-ordinated approach to data collection and sharing among agencies at local level.

A sub-group of the Regional Forum is currently considering how a pilot scheme based on criminal justice initiatives in the USA (the Duluth and Quincy models) could be initiated in Northern Ireland.

An inter-denominational sub-group is preparing a strategy information pack and guidelines on domestic violence, for use by clergy and parish workers.

Awareness of Domestic Violence

In Northern Ireland publicity campaigns were held during March and November 1995, and over the Christmas and New Year in 1996/97 and 1997/98. Posters and information leaflets were also produced and roadshows were held in provincial towns.

During 1997 and 1998, the Regional Forum on Domestic Violence has been proactive in raising awareness across a wide spectrum of professional interests through seminars, conferences, meetings, and contributions to information literature. A significant amount of training has also taken place.

A training pack and videos have been produced which are used in the training of social workers, police and women's groups. Over 4,000 police have been trained. Training for trainers of Health and Social Services professionals has also taken place, and people who work with children who have suffered domestic violence have also received a training pack.

The Northern Ireland Office produced a publication called *Stopping Crime Starts with You*. This publication includes a section which provides useful and practical advice to women to help them protect themselves. The NIO have also produced a publication called *Six Steps to Protect Your Home* which includes practical advice on domestic security, and lists a number of helplines of organisations which can provide support. It was re-issued early in 1998.

Support for victims of Domestic Violence

In Northern Ireland, the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order, which develops and strengthens the civil law on domestic violence, was recently approved by Parliament and will be implemented in March 1999.

In Northern Ireland registered housing associations are mainly concerned with the provision of housing for people with special needs, including victims of domestic violence. Although the properties in question are owned by the associations, day-to-day management is carried out by voluntary organisations such as the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation (NIWAF). By 1995, associations had provided 8 women's refuges totalling 107 places and an additional 13 properties were acquired for vulnerable women with children. A further 2 refuges with 61 places are under construction and 10 further projects totalling 239 places are planned during the next three years. NIWAF launched a regional 24 hour telephone helpline in March 1995. 4,300 calls were received during 1996/97 and 6,417 during 1997/98.

Refuge Provision

NIWAF provides temporary refuge to women and children suffering emotional, physical or sexual abuse within the home. In 1996/97 over 11,000 women sought help from Women's Aid. 916 women and 1,462 children were given emergency temporary accommodation. There are 11 refuges with facilities for the disabled in 8 of these. In addition there are 20 'move on' houses for families who move out of the refuge.

By the year 2000 it is hoped that there will be 430 refuge places available. This will meet the target recommended in the 1976 House of Commons Select Committee Paper on Violence in the Family.

Funding

The DHSS within the Northern Ireland Office provides the NIWAF with funding towards their regional administrative costs, and towards support of the local inter-agency groups. The NIO and DHSS have provided funding towards publicity, the helpline and research. The Department of the Environment funds 100% of the capital costs of women's aid refuges in Northern Ireland. The Government also funds the NIWAF with over £150,000 in 1998/99.

Legislation

The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order was recently approved by Parliament. The legislation was informed by recent research in England which highlighted the effects of domestic violence on children and the safety of child contact arrangements, where there has been a history of domestic violence to the mother. When this legislation comes into operation, Northern Ireland will be at the forefront in the UK and Europe in relation to anti-domestic violence legislation.

Harassment

The Protection from Harassment (NI) Order 1997, in addition to creating a criminal offence of harassment, will also protect victims through the civil law when Article 5(3) to (9) comes into operation. The courts will be able to make an injunction preventing harassment, breach of which will be a criminal offence. The Order also empowers the civil courts to award damages to the victim for (among other things) any anxiety caused by the harassment and any financial loss resulting from it. These new remedies will be useful to women who are the victims of stalking, nuisance telephone calls etc. and will complement the domestic violence remedies available under the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (NI) Order 1998.

Criminal Justice

In recent years there have been a number of noteworthy developments in Northern Ireland in relation to domestic violence in the criminal justice field, including:

- the publication of a policy statement on domestic violence by the Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI);
- the appointment of RUC Domestic Violence Liaison Officers to cover all 38 policy subdivisions;
- the correlation of outcomes from the Courts on domestic violence cases by the RUC;
- a pilot scheme for formally cautioning first time offenders accused of less serious assaults;
- programmes for perpetrators of domestic violence - *Men Overcoming Domestic Violence* introduced and run by the PBNI; and
- an awareness raising seminar held in May 1997 for members of the judiciary.

Support for Victims in Court

In 1997 a Victims Steering Group was established and one of their first actions was to develop a Code of Practice. The booklet explains what happens after a victim has reported an offence to the police and the standards of service that a victim can expect to receive during any contact with the agencies working in that sector. Domestic Violence Liaison Officers have been appointed to each of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's (RUC) sub-divisions.

Public Transport

Northern Ireland's transport operating companies have introduced new measures to increase women's safety when travelling on public transport. These include: improved lighting for new bus shelters and in all new rail stations and bus depots; radio contact for all late night bus services in Belfast; double-glazed windows on all new buses and trains and greater use of on-board video on Citybus services.

Divorce Laws

Following the reform of the divorce law in England and Wales in the Family Law Act 1996, the Office of Law Reform in Northern Ireland commissioned a major research project into the operation of divorce law, practice and procedure in Northern Ireland and the use made of mediation services. The findings of the research will be published, together with the first in a series of consultation papers on the reform of NI divorce law, in the late Spring 1999.

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

In Northern Ireland the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 brought the legislative position broadly into line with that which covers England and Wales.

The Child Support Agency

The NI Child Support Agency mirrors the GB Agency. As part of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review programme, an evaluation of the delivery of child support in Great Britain looked at options to simplify the system, to radically improve the speed and accuracy of maintenance assessments and to ensure the early and continuing collection of maintenance payments. A Green Paper setting out the Government's proposals for a major reshaping of the child support scheme was published in July 1998.

SCOTLAND

Women and girls are more likely to feel unsafe or anxious about crime than men and boys. The Scottish Crime Survey found that 48% of all women, compared with 21% of men said that they felt unsafe when walking in their area after dark. Around half of 12-15 year olds were worried about being the victim of housebreaking, mugging, assault or sexual assault. Girls were more anxious than boys about each type of crime.

Preventing Violence Against Women : A Scottish Office Action Plan

In Scotland, responsibility for polices relating to violence lies with a wide range of Scottish Office Departments. There are also a number of other agencies which respond to victim's needs. Because of this and differences in Scottish law and culture, it was decided to develop a Scottish action plan on violence against women to deal with matters specifically within the control of Scottish Ministers which will become the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament in July 1999.

Preventing Violence Against Women: A Scottish Office Action Plan was published in November 1998 as a consultation document. It set out a plan of action which will be refined into a strategic document in the light of responses received. The plan must have the support of organisations representing the interests of women who have been or may become victims of violence. It has therefore been widely circulated to such organisations. Responses are requested by February 1999.

Domestic Violence

In Scotland, over the 10 year period 1987 to 1996, over 44% of female victims of homicide were killed by their partners and a further 23% by relatives. During the same period, only 7% of male victims were killed by their partners and a further 13% were allegedly killed by other relatives.

In order to discover how the Scottish Office could best contribute to supporting victims, a study was commissioned to review the type of services available to abused women and their children. Its remit was to discover:

- what services are currently available in Scotland to women, and their children, who suffer violence at the hands of their partner;

- what gaps exist in these service, whether in type, quantity or geographic location, and how they might be filled; and
- what service providers consider is the most appropriate role for the Scottish Office and others in the effort to combat domestic violence.

A report of this study was published in March 1998 under the title *Service Provision to Women Experiencing Domestic Violence in Scotland.* The report made 26 recommendations to the Scottish Office/Central Government and addressed a further 36 to service providers including local authority housing and social work departments, police forces, Health Boards, Scottish Women's Aid and the Benefits Agency.

The Scottish Office also published, in 1997, the result of a thematic inspection by HM Inspectorate of Constabulary of the police response to domestic violence. Entitled *Hitting Home* the report indicates that repeat victimisation is high and that demand from victims for police services has increased in recent years. Nevertheless, there has been great improvement in liaison with local authority services and other agencies over the past 10 years and this report will help spread the existing good practice identified in a number of police forces.

To disseminate the results of these reports and to draw attention to related work by the Scottish Needs Assessment Programme and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), a joint conference was organised by the Scottish Office, the Health Education Board for Scotland, the Scottish Needs Assessment Programme and COSLA and took place at the Police College Tulliallan in June 1998. At the conference, the Minister of State announced that he intended to set up a Scottish Partnership on Domestic Violence.

The Partnership met for the first time in November 1998. Membership includes representative organisations who are actively involved in dealing with the various aspects of domestic violence. Its remit is:

- to recommend a strategy on domestic violence which is firmly located within the Government's overall strategy on violence against women and which takes into account the impact of domestic violence on children and young people; and the need for effective intervention strategies to prevent male violence against female partners and their children;
- to recommend standards and levels of service for women experiencing domestic violence in order to encourage consistent service delivery throughout Scotland, having particular regard to the needs of women from rural areas, women from ethnic minorities and women with disabilities and taking into account the impact on children and young people affected;
- to recommend a framework for monitoring progress in dealing with domestic violence;
- to cost all recommendations involving resources;

- to consider which recommendations should be given priority for action, taking into account of such factors as their impact, costs, the speed with which they can be implemented and local variations and needs and existing provision; and
- to report to the Minister for Women's Issues by March 1999 setting out a detailed work-plan and time-scale for discharging the remit in full.

Public Awareness

While a good deal of progress has been made in raising awareness in Scotland in recent years, work continues in an effort to improve the way in which domestic violence is viewed. To this end a provocative television commercial was produced as part of a national publicity campaign, developed by a group which included the Scottish Office, the police and voluntary organisations, and launched by the Scottish Crime Prevention Council in 1994. The campaign targeted the offender, highlighting the criminality of the act and attempting to change public attitude by making it graphically clear that domestic violence is abhorrent and socially unacceptable. The television campaign was supported by a poster campaign on sites across Scotland.

A comprehensive evaluation study of the media campaign was published in 1995. It confirmed that the campaign had achieved its aims. Public recognition had been excellent, estimating that 94% of the adult population had viewed the commercial which gained a number of media awards, scoring the highest standards ever achieved by the Scottish Office and an advertising campaign.

A second phase began with a re-broadcast during the Rugby World Cup Finals in 1995. This was followed by a series of radio advertisements using the soundtrack of the television commercial. The Scottish Office will launch a new advertising campaign in early 1999.

A new awareness raising campaign began Christmas 1998 with a television advertisement which was screened for the first time over the Christmas holiday. It was hard hitting but did not show actual violence, allowing it to be screened before the 9pm watershed. The campaign will roll out over 3 years. It has the support of media editors and programme planners who will use editorial, advertorial and magazine features to bring home the message and it will also be reflected in the story-lines of popular series and soaps. The campaign will be supported by a telephone help-line.

The Scottish Office published in 1996 a research evaluation of programmes for violent men.

Preventing Domestic Violence

The Scottish Office Crime Prevention Unit has produced a women's safety package (leaflet and video) called *Seeing Sense*. It was launched in May 1993 by the Scottish Crime Prevention Council and includes a section on domestic violence.

Refuge Provision

A survey by Scottish Women's Aid has indicated that there are a total of 67 refuges in Scotland (providing 325 spaces). The Scottish Office is providing funding in 1998/99 of over £200,000 to Scottish Women's Aid. This includes over £83,000 for work on developing refuge and permanent re-housing options for abused women who would otherwise be homeless, over £111,000 for the social welfare aspects of their work and £25,000 for training.

Legal Provision

In Scotland the law is set out in the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981. This Act gives the court power to grant an exclusion order to either of the spouses from the matrimonial home. The Act also gives the police powers to arrest, in certain circumstances, perpetrators of domestic violence. This Act has generally worked well but the 1992 Report on Family Law by the Scottish Law Commission recommended widening its provisions to cover, for example cohabitants and former cohabitants. The Scottish Office will consult in Autumn 1999 on implementing the remaining provisions in the Scottish Law Commission report, and any legislation arising from the consultation will be a matter for the Scottish Parliament.

The Scottish Office is committed to providing community legal services which will ensure that the legal aid system meets the needs and priorities of local communities. It has also undertaken to improve access to justice by making better use of the legal aid budget and ensuring value for money for the taxpayer and the customer. In its consultation paper *Access to Justice beyond the Year 2000* it discussed various possible models of community legal services that might be piloted using legal aid funds, and various ways of administering legal aid funds so as to promote access to justice for those of limited means. The consultation period ended in August 1998.

Family Law

A consultation exercise on Family Law in Scotland will take place between February and April 1999. Any legislative changes proposed will be for the Scottish Parliament to consider.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

Part 1 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 came into force on 1 November 1996. It sets out the rights and responsibilities which parents have in relation to their children. These are framed so that emphasis is placed on both parents taking responsibility for the raising of their children. The old diversive concepts of "custody" and "access" have been replaced by concepts of "residence" and "contact" which allow children to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents.

In November 1996, the Scottish Office issued a booklet entitled *You Matter* for children and young people. A publication for parents, *Your Children Matter* was published in October 1998. It clearly sets out parents' responsibilities and rights.

WALES

Refuge Provision

There are 35 local groups subscribed to Welsh Women's Aid, running 40 refuges and 20 information centres between them.

The Welsh Office provides financial support for projects in 9 refuges and advice centres (e.g. child worker and outreach worker posts) as well as substantial core funding to Welsh Women's Aid. Total Departmental funding (including core funding to Welsh Women's Aid) amounts to £360,000 in the financial year 1998/99.

During 1996/97 the usual increase in the numbers of women and children accommodated in refuges was not apparent:

- 1,827 women and 2,826 children were given shelter in refuges in 1996/97;
- 2,076 women were referred on by local groups who were unable to accommodate them; and
- 17,302 telephone calls and/or visits were made to local groups by women requiring information and support.

However, there was a huge increase in the numbers of women accessing the service in other ways - namely through outreach and floating support schemes:

- 1,581 women were helped in this way during the year: and
- 1,630 children were recorded as obtaining support.

In total:

- 3,408 families (women with or without children) were accommodated and/or given continued support by Welsh Women's Aid groups during 1996/97; and
- the recorded figure for the number of children accommodated or given continued support was 4,456.

Since many outreach schemes do not require children's details to be recorded separately, it is very likely that the actual number of children and young people is much higher.

Glossary

ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
ADOCG	Advance Diploma in the Organisation of Community Groups
AEA	UK Atomic Energy Authority
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMI	Acute Myorcardial Infarcation
ASH	Action on Smoking and Health
AWE	Atomic Weapons Establishment
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBFC	British Board of Film Classification
BCS	British Crime Survey
BNFL	British Nuclear Fuels Ltd
BRHS	British Regional Heart Survey
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CCWS	Crown Court Witness Service
CHD	Coronary Heart Disease
CLAW	Control of Lead At Work
COMA	Committee On the Medical Aspects of Food Nutrition
CORT	Consortium of Rural TECs
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSG	Consultative Steering Group
CVD	Cerebro-Vascular Disease
DANI	Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DEA	Disability Employment Adviser
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFP	Department of Finance and Personnel (Northern Ireland)
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Security (Northern Ireland)
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DOE (NI)	Department of Environment for Northern Ireland
DoH	Department of Health
DRC	Disability Rights Commission
DRTF	Disability Rights Task Force
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EAGA	Expert Advisory Group on Aids
EC	European Commission
ECG	Electro Cardiogram
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EEA	European Economic Area
EO	Executive Officer
EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
EOC (NI)	Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland
ES	Employment Service
ESC	English Sports Council
EU	European Union
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMTV	Good Morning Television
GP	General Practitioner
GSS	Government Statistical Service
HEBS	Health Education Board Scotland
HEO	Higher Executive Officer
HRT	Hormone Replacement Therapy
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
INSET	In-Service Training
ITC	Independent Television Commission
ITT	Initial Training
ITV	Independent Television Commission
IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
LDL	Low Density Lipo Protein
LEA	Local Education Authority
LEC	Local Enterprise Council
LEDU	Local Enterprise Development Unit
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LWT	London Weekend Television
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
NACRO	National Association of the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NDC	National Disability Council
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NFU	National Farmer's Union
NHS	National Health Service
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIO	Northern Ireland Office
NMW	National Minimum Wage
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OFSTED	Office of Standards in Education
OLAC	Open Learning Access Centres
ONS	Office for National Statistics
OPCS	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
OSCI	Out of School Childcare Initiative
PACT	Placing, Assessment and Counselling Team
PE	Physical Education
PMS	Pre-Menstrual Syndrome
PSHE	Personnel, Social and Health Education
PSS-R	Physical Selection Standards Recruits
RAF	Royal Air Force
RASE	Royal Agricultural Society of England
RDC	Rural Development Commission
RDP	Rural Development Programme
S4C	TV Channel 4 (Wales)
SBSP	Scottish Breast Screening Programme
SCNI	Sports Council for Northern Ireland
SCS	Senior Civil Service
SCSP	Scottish Cervical Screening Programme
SEO	Senior Executive Officer
SERPS	State Earnings Related Pension Scheme

SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SMAC	Standing Medical Advisory Policy Committee
SMP	Statutory Maternity Pay
SNAP	Scottish Needs Assessment Programme
SO	Scottish Office
SRPF	Scottish Rural Partnership Fund
SSPPR	European Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation
STOP	Sexual Trafficking in Persons programme
T & EA	Training and Employment Agency (Northern Ireland)
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TTA	Teacher Training Agency
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCL	Urenco Capenhurst Ltd.
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
WDA	Welsh Development Agency
WFTC	Working Families Tax Credit
WHO	World Health Organisation
WNC	Women's National Commission
WO	Welsh Office
WU	Women's Unit
YOI	Young Offenders Institution